Master's in Philosophical Knowledge:
Foundations, Methods, Applications

Bergamo
Pavia

1. Evidence and Evidentialism

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Faculty of
Philosophy

lecture aims

- to introduce evidentialism and to consider criticisms and problems for evidentialism
- to consider the concept of evidence and theories of what evidence is

introducing evidentialism and evidence

under what conditions may one believe a proposition *p*?

plausible answer

when one has sufficient evidence in support of *p*

introducing evidentialism and evidence

under what conditions may one believe a proposition *p*?

plausible answer

when one has sufficient evidence in support of *p*

what *is* evidence?

introducing evidentialism and evidence

under what conditions may one believe a proposition *p*?

plausible answer

when one has sufficient evidence in support of *p*

what is support?

introducing evidentialism and evidence

under what conditions may one believe a proposition *p*?

plausible answer

when one has sufficient evidence in support of *p*

how much is sufficient?

introducing evidentialism and evidence

evidentialism

(EVI) S is justified in believing proposition *p* [if and] only if S's evidence supports *p*.

epistemic justification

Feldman, R. and Conee, E. (1985). Evidentialism. *Philosophical Studies*, 48: 15–34.

introducing evidentialism and evidence

the proposition that *p* is supported S's evidence

but S may not believe that *p* for *this* reason

S justifiedly believes that *p* because S's evidence supports the proposition that *p*

distinguish:

propositional justification

doxastic justification

e.g. S has evidence for the proposition that *p* but does not use this evidence in coming to believe that *p*

introducing evidentialism and evidence

evidentialism

(EVI) S is justified in believing proposition *p* only if S's evidence supports *p*.

distinguish:
propositional justification
doxastic justification

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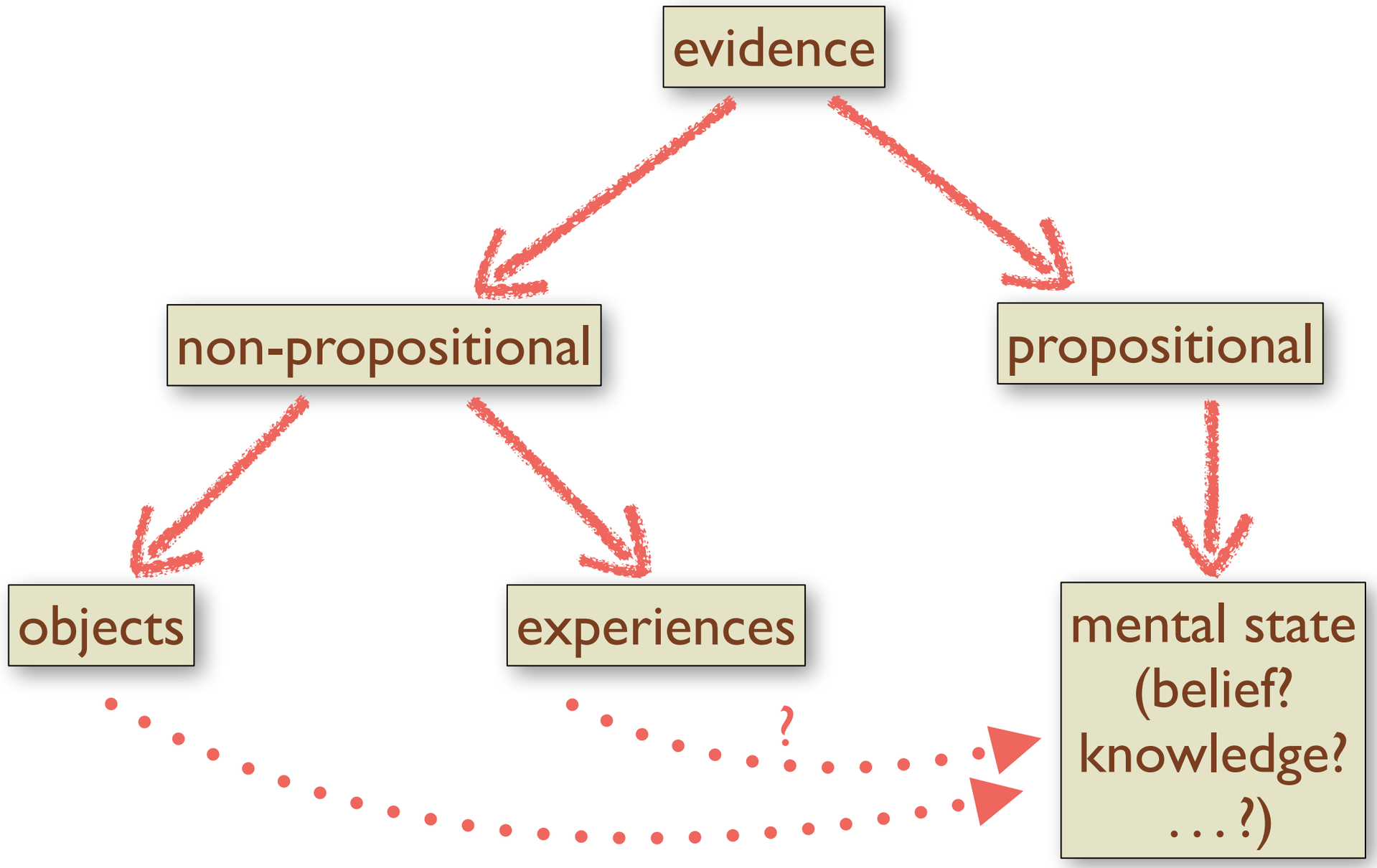
introducing evidentialism and evidence

evidence



introducing evidentialism and evidence

evidence

the term ‘evidence’ in English has roots connecting it with ‘evident’ (meaning *obvious*), but not longer possesses this connotation

no direct translation into Italian
perhaps *prova* or *evidenza*

key idea: distinguish between premises and argument, or between an argument and its starting point, between reasons and reasoning with those reasons

e.g. the court is presented with a weapon and DNA etc. these are **evidence** — argument is need to turn these into a proof against the accused

introducing evidentialism and evidence

support

when is *e* evidence for *h*?

when does *e* support *h*?

theory of confirmation (in philosophy of science)

incremental versus absolute confirmation

evidential support and confirmation

support

best possible support: *e* entails *h*

probabilistic support: *e* partially entails *h*

(inductive logic)

this can be formalised

can this be formalised?

Crupi, V. (2021). Confirmation. In Zalta, E. N., editor, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

evidential support and confirmation

support

can we formalise the relation of probabilistic/inductive support (partial entailment etc.)?

e.g.

- inductivism: instances of Fs that are G confirm 'all Fs are Gs'
- hypothetico-deductivism: *e* confirms *h* if *e* is deducible from *h*

evidential support and confirmation

support

can we formalise the relation of probabilistic/inductive support (partial entailment etc.)?

NO

two reasons:

- Bayes's theorem and the need for prior probabilities
- Goodman's new riddle of induction

evidential support and confirmation

Bayes's theorem

$$P(h|e) = \frac{P(h)\,P(e|h)}{P(e)}$$

prior probabilities

evidential support and confirmation

Goodman's new riddle of induction

instances of Fs that are G confirm 'all Fs are Gs'

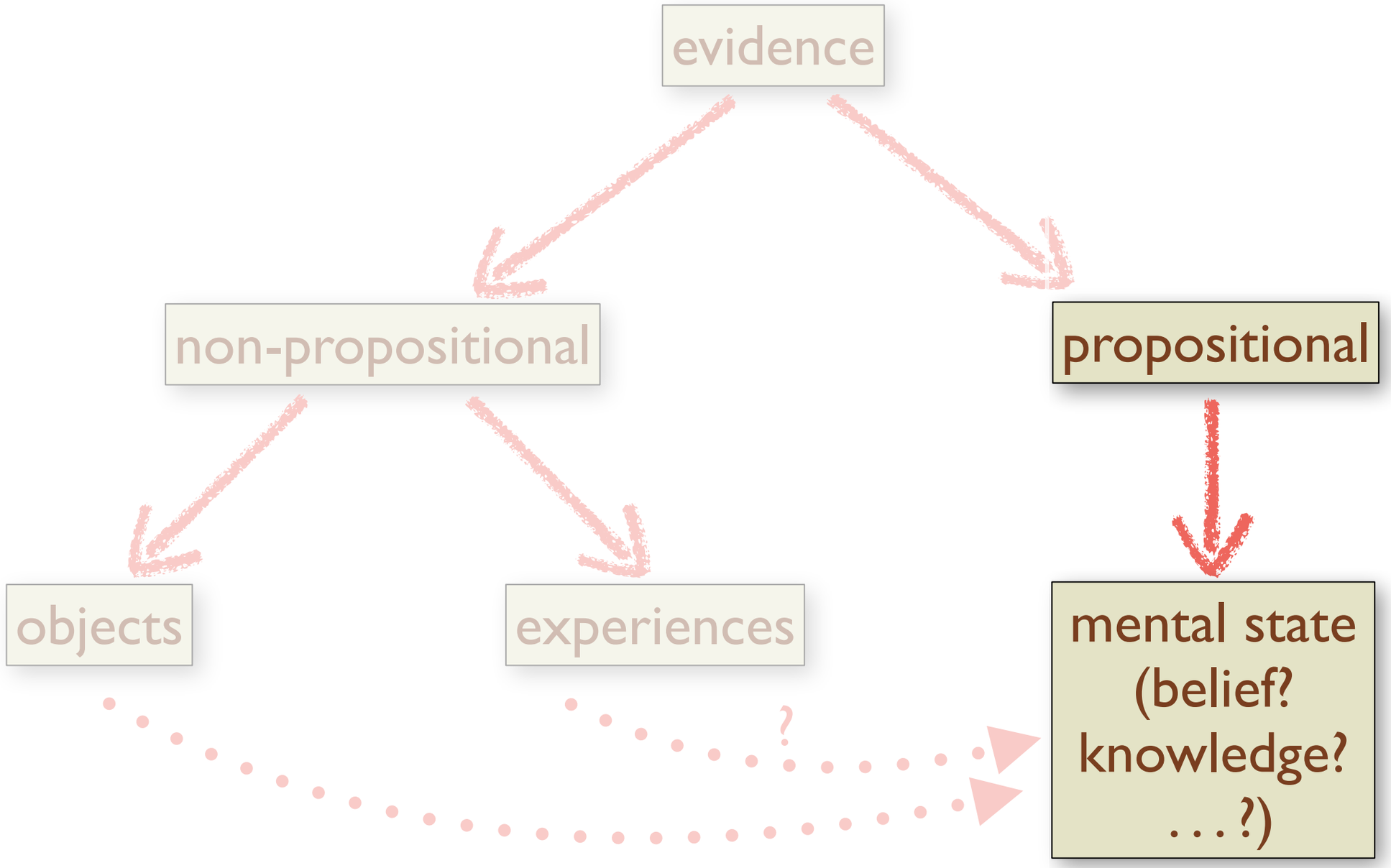
this is a green emerald confirms all emeralds are green

this is a grue emerald confirms all emeralds are grue

inconsistent

evidence

evidence



evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S believes *p*

S's evidence includes *p* only if S believes *p*

S's evidence includes *p* if S believes *p*

Williamson, T. (1997). Knowledge as evidence. *Mind*, 106: 1–25.
Bird, A. (2018). Evidence and inference. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 96: 299–317.

evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if S believes *p*

do one's false beliefs count as evidence?

Williamson, T. (1997). Knowledge as evidence. *Mind*, 106: 1–25.
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evidence

‘reject a hypothesis inconsistent with your evidence’

implies evidence must be true

S’s evidence includes *p* if S believes *p*

do one’s false beliefs count as evidence?

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S believe *p* and *p* is true

S's evidence includes *p* only if S believes *p* and *p* is true

S's evidence includes *p* if S believes *p* and *p* is true

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evidence

suggests evidence must be justified belief

S's evidence includes *p* if S believes *p* and *p* is true

over-confident lucky guess?

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S has a justified true belief *p*

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S has a justified true belief *p*

if knowledge = justified true belief *then*

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S has a justified true belief *p*

if knowledge = justified true belief *then*

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

Gettier?

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S has a justified true belief *p*

knowledge ≠ justified true belief

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

E = K

Williamson, T. (1997). Knowledge as evidence. *Mind*, 106: 1–25.
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evidence

why do we want evidence?

we want evidence to test (confirm, disconfirm) hypotheses

we want to have correct beliefs about hypotheses on the basis of inference from evidence

Williamson, T. (1997). Knowledge as evidence. *Mind*, 106: 1–25.
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evidence

when does belief achieve its goal?

when belief is a belief correct/satisfactory?

let's assume that belief aims at knowledge

only beliefs that amount to knowledge are satisfactory/correct

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evidence

we want to have correct beliefs about hypotheses on the basis of inference from evidence

only beliefs that amount to knowledge are satisfactory/ correct

evidence is that which allows us to gain knowledge from it by inference

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evidence

evidence is that which allows us to gain knowledge from it by inference

evidence

evidence is that which allows us to gain knowledge from it by inference

what constraints does this put on evidence?

only knowledge allows us to gain knowledge by inference

evidence is knowledge

E = K

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

is all knowledge evidence?

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p*

alternative proposals

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p* non-inferentially

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p* from experience

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evidence

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p* non-inferentially

S's evidence includes *p* if and only if S knows *p* from experience

the problem of forgotten evidence

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evidentialism

evidentialism

(EVI) S is justified in believing proposition *p* [if and] only if S's evidence supports *p*.

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the Agrippan trilemma

(JUST) If S is justified in believing proposition *p* then, for some proposition *q*, S is justified in believing *q* and *q* supports *p*.

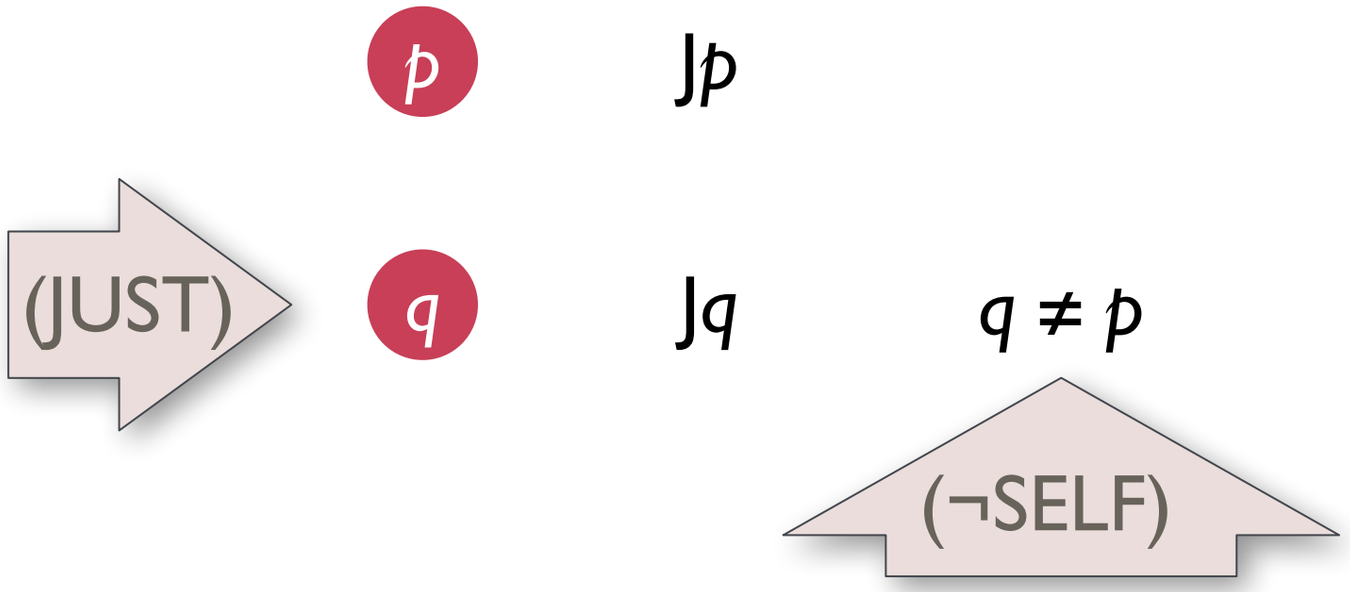
(¬SELF) A proposition cannot be justified by supporting itself.

(¬CIRC) A proposition cannot cannot be justified by a chain of support that is circular.

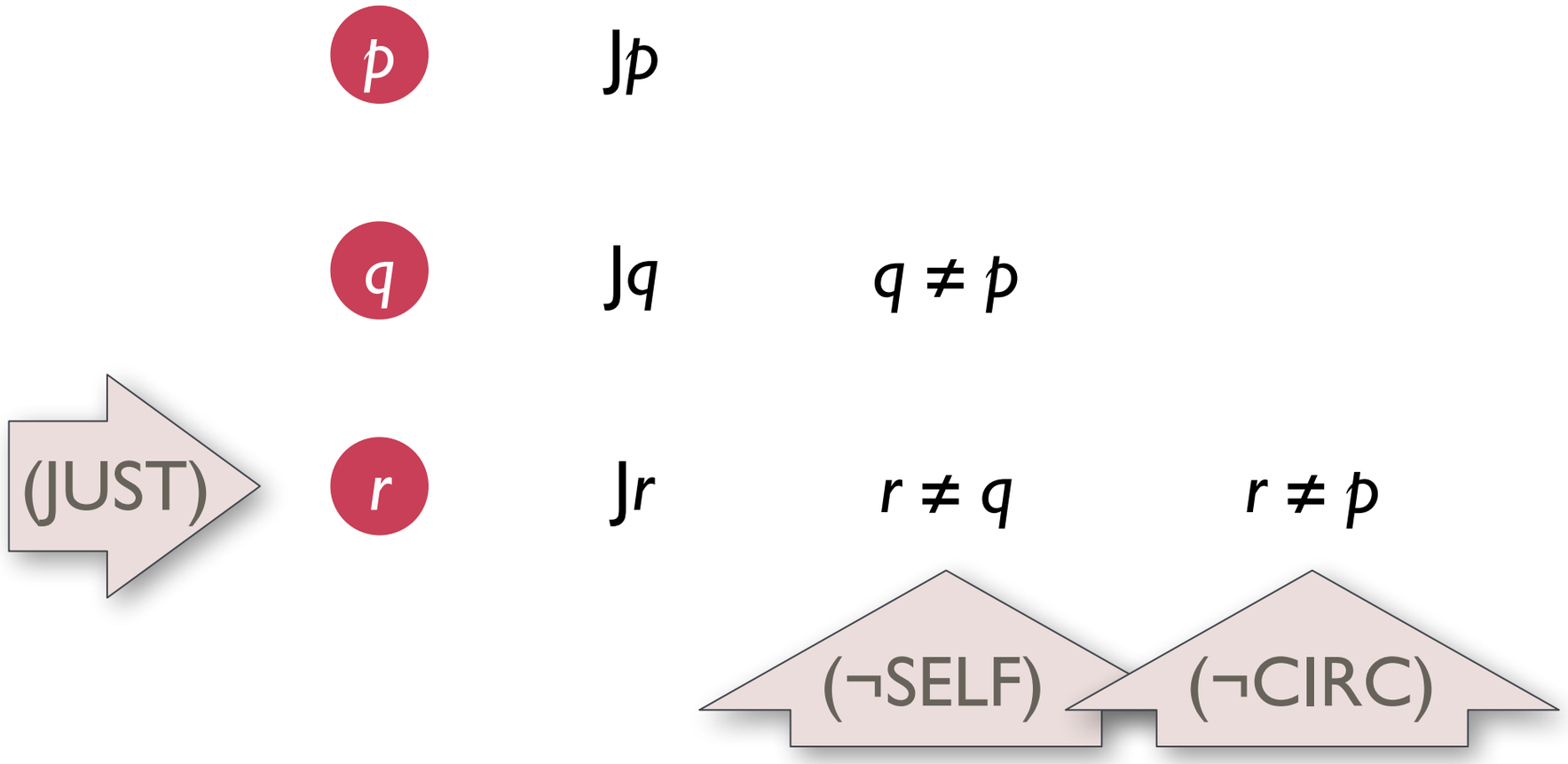
(¬INF) A belief in a proposition cannot be justified by an infinite chain of support.

(SCEP-J) No-one has any justified beliefs

the Agrippan trilemma



the Agrippan trilemma



the Agrippan trilemma

p Jp

q Jq $q \neq p$

(¬INF)

r Jr $r \neq q$ $q \neq p$

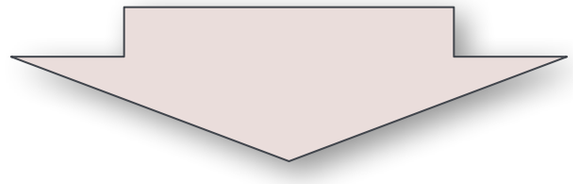
$\neg Jp$ s Js $s \neq r$ $s \neq q$ $s \neq p$

(SCEP-J) No-one has any justified beliefs

the Agrippan trilemma

(SCEP-J) No-one has any justified beliefs

(K→J) If S knows *p* then S is justified in believing proposition *p*



(SCEP-K) No-one has any knowledge

the Agrippan trilemma

Agrippa

(JUST) ∧ (K→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

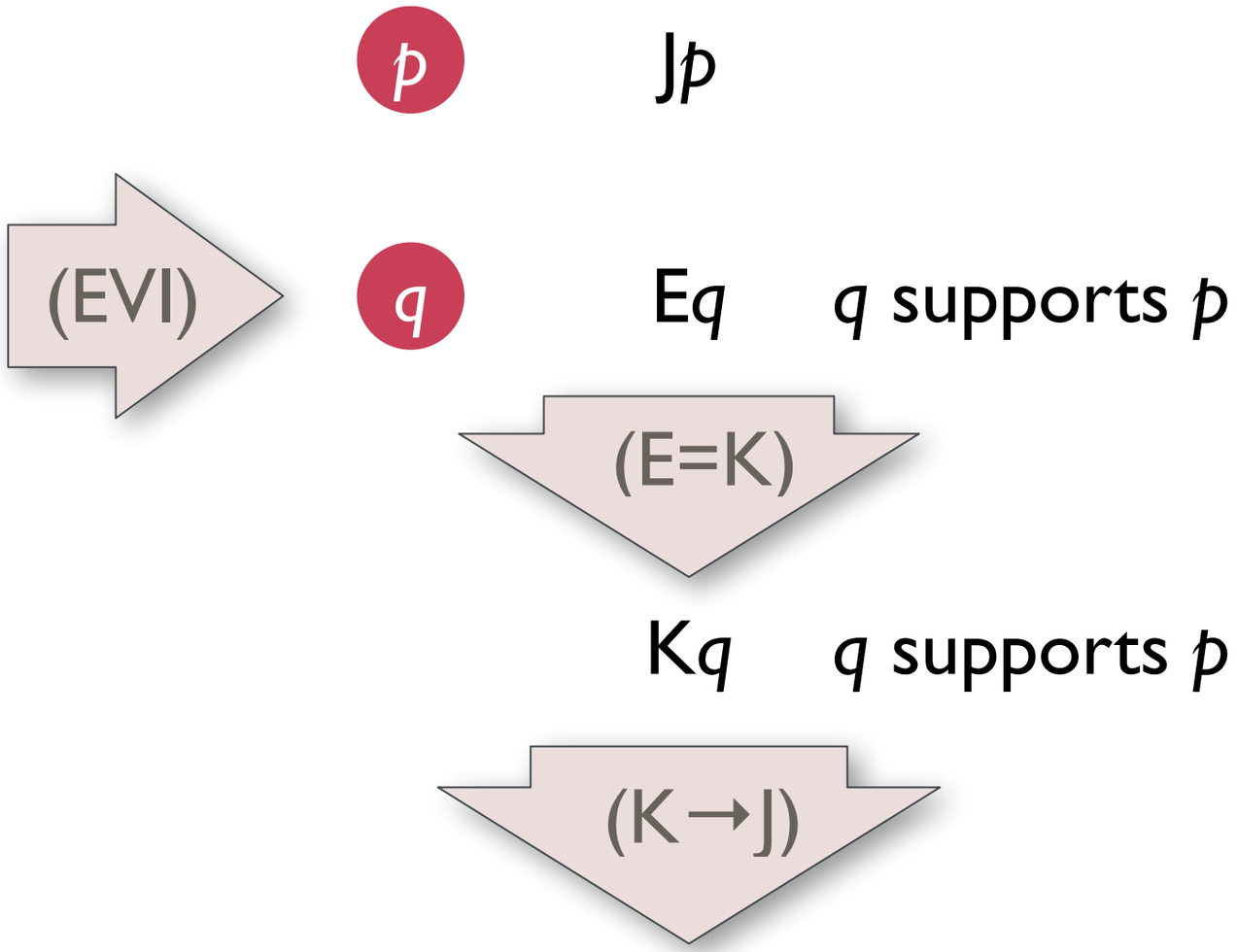
Agrippa plus

(EVI) S is justified in believing proposition *p* if and only if S's evidence supports *p*.

(E=K) S's evidence is precisely what S knows (*p* is in S's evidence iff S knows *p*).

(K→J) If S knows *p* then S is justified in believing proposition *p*

Agrippa plus



(JUST) If S is justified in believing proposition *p* then, for some proposition *q*, S is justified in believing *q* and *q* supports *p*

Agrippa plus

(EVI) ∧ (E=K) ∧ (K→J)

⊨

(JUST)

Agrippa

(JUST) ∧ (K→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

Agrippa plus

(EVI) ∧ (E=K) ∧ (K→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

Agrippa plus

Agrippa plus

(EVI) ∧ (E=K) ∧ (K→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus

(EVI) ∧ (E≠K) ∧ (K→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

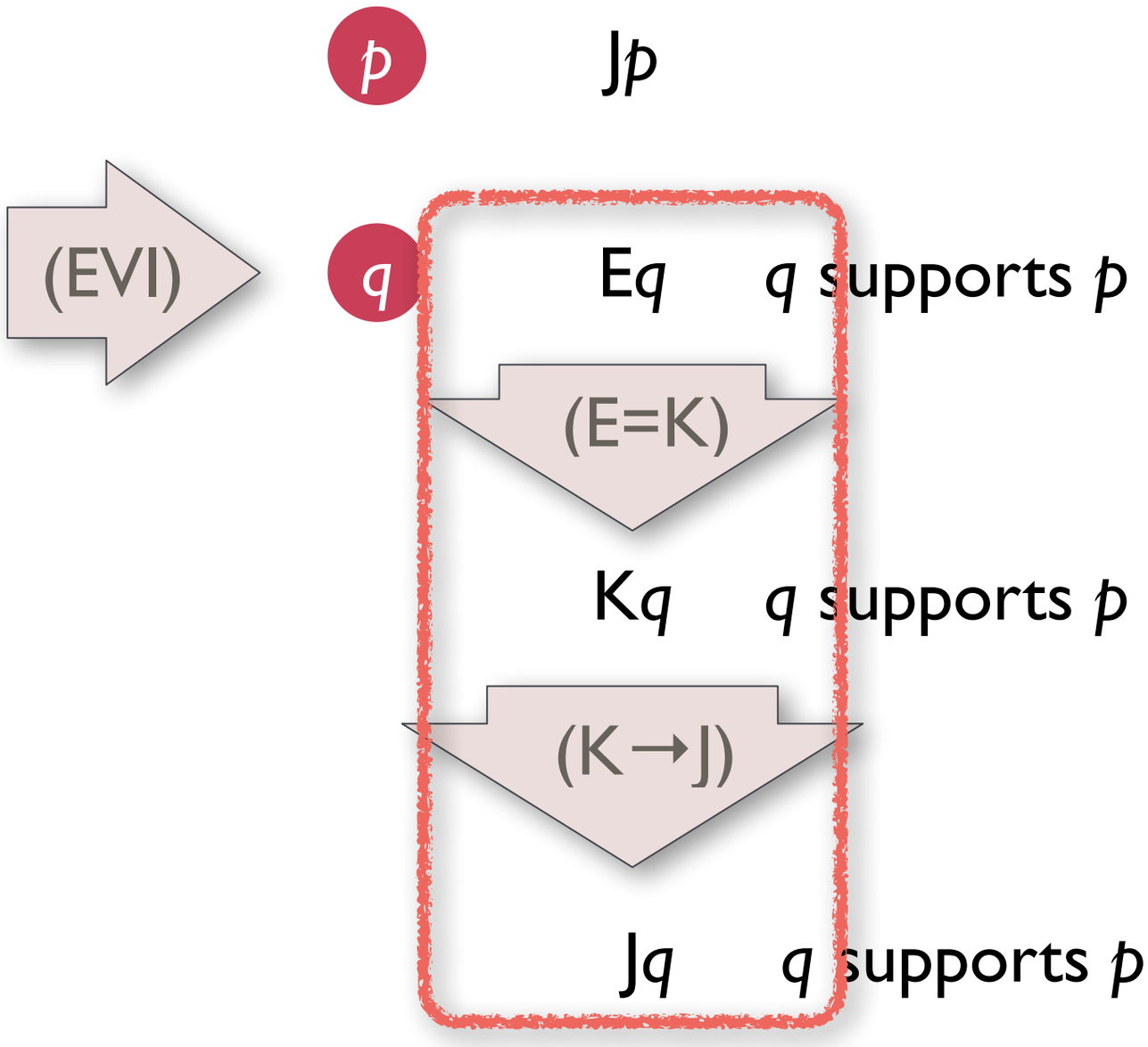
⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

could we reject E = K?

but note . . .

avoiding scepticism



(JUST) If S is justified in believing proposition *p* then, for some proposition *q*, S is justified in believing *q* and *q* supports *p*

avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus

(EVI) ∧ (E=K) ∧ (K→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus (v.2.0)

(EVI) ∧ (E→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus (v.2.0)

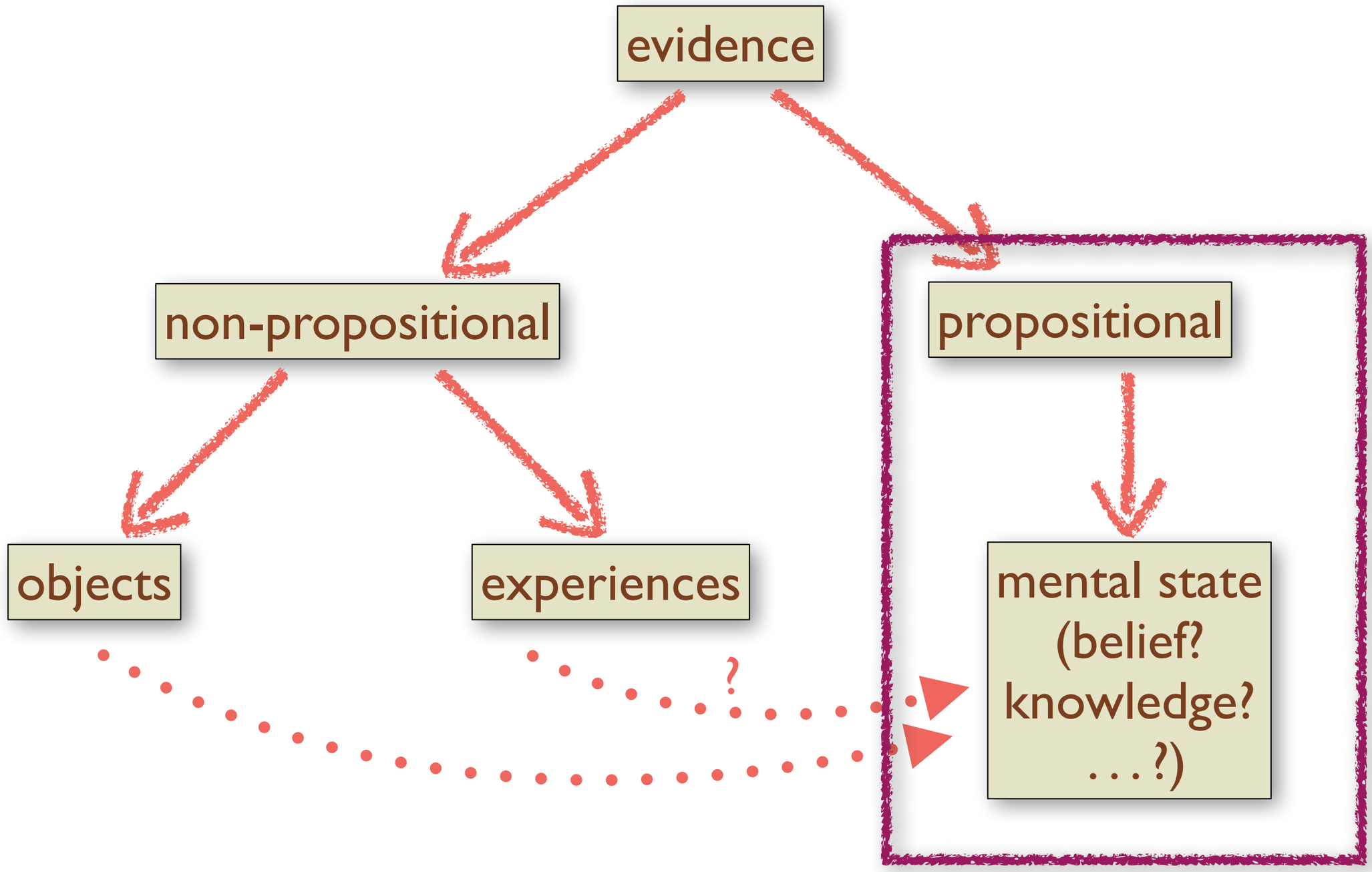
(EVI) ∧ ~~(E→J)~~ ∧ ~~(¬SELF)~~ ∧ ~~(¬CIRC)~~ ∧ ~~(¬INF)~~

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

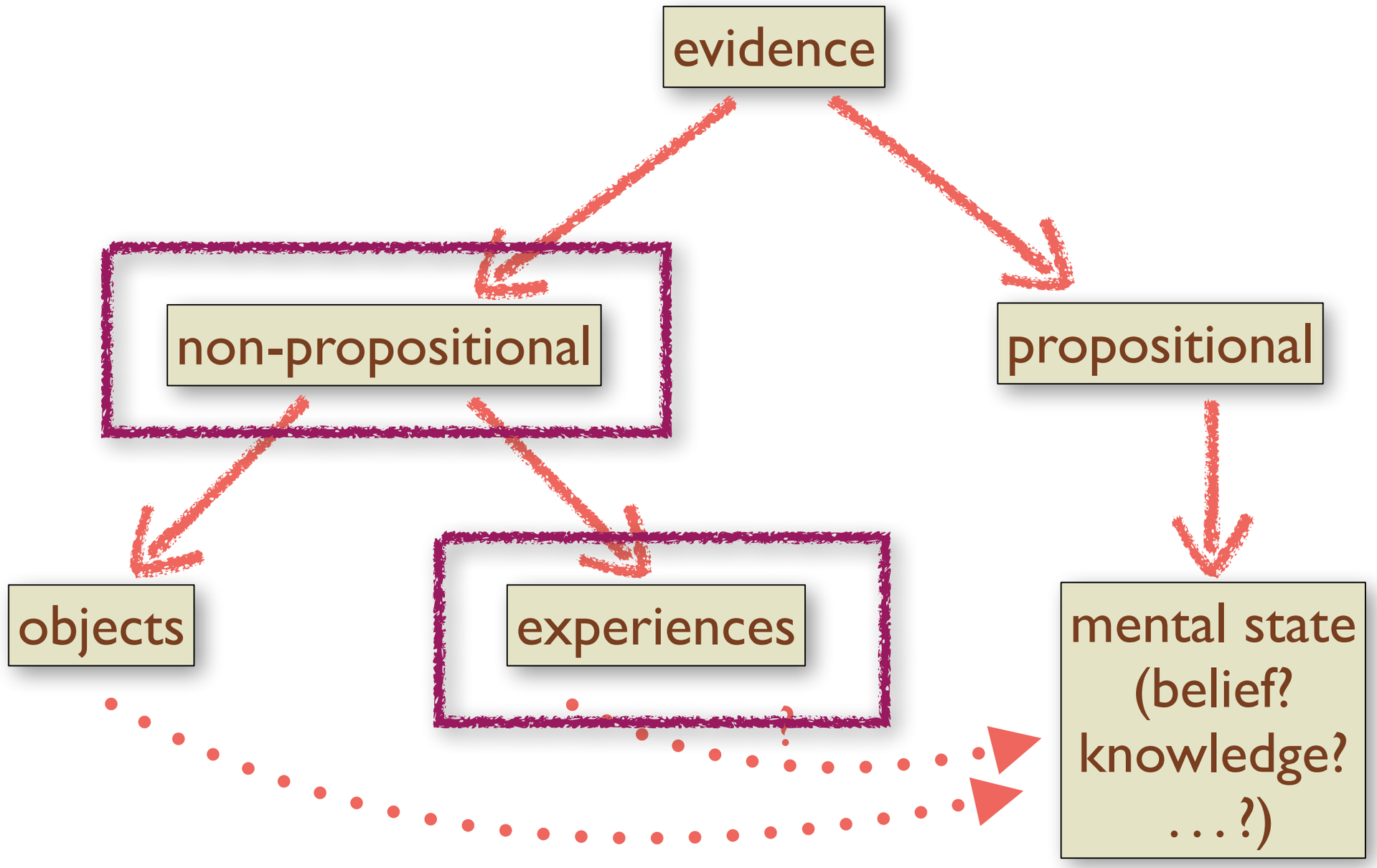
avoiding scepticism

evidence



avoiding scepticism

evidence — denying (E→J)



avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus (v.2.0)

(EVI) ∧ ~~(E→J)~~ ∧ ~~(¬SELF)~~ ∧ ~~(¬CIRC)~~ ∧ ~~(¬INF)~~

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus (v.2.0)

(EVI) ∧ (E→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

foundationalism

coherentism

avoiding scepticism

Agrippa plus (v.2.0)

(EVI) ∧ (E→J) ∧ (¬SELF) ∧ (¬CIRC) ∧ (¬INF)

⊨

(SCEP-J) ∧ (SCEP-K)

evidentialism is false: some beliefs are justified without being justified by evidence

avoiding scepticism

evidentialism is false: some beliefs are justified without being justified by evidence

some (all?) beliefs are justified by an appropriate connection with the truth

appropriate connection = causation or reliability or tracking

externalism about justification

avoiding scepticism

internalism

justification depends only on 'internal' facts

externalism

justification can depends on 'external' facts

internal facts:

within the skin/brain *or* mental states

external facts:

causation *or* reliability *or* tracking

internalism

what justifies belief must be accessible to the subject

externalism

what justifies belief need not be accessible to the subject

reading

see reading list at: http://www.alexanderbird.org/Teaching/Reading_lists.pdf