

# Evidence and Virtue (and Beyond)

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## 1. Introduction

Evidentialism and virtue epistemology (VE) looked like markedly divergent theories for many years after their early formulations in Conee and Feldman (1985) and Sosa (1991). Their divergence reflected a broader rivalry between reasons-first epistemology, which grounds epistemic normativity in reasons, and a family of virtue-theoretic epistemologies, which ground epistemic normativity in competences or character traits. But times are changing, partly thanks to new work on reasons and virtue. In light of this work, some theorists on both sides are revising their views, with some approaches converging.<sup>1</sup> Given the trends, one might be tempted to jump to the Parfitian conclusion that the two parties are climbing the mountain from different sides, only to arrive at the same peak.

But even if this happy conclusion were true, a question would remain about how to best describe the view from the peak. One possibility is that the best view is hybrid. But a unified theory would be nice. Three options present themselves. Firstly, one could argue that evidentialism is the fundamental truth, and that we can derive VE's themes from evidentialism properly understood. Secondly, one could argue that VE provides the correct fundamental description, and that evidentialist themes flow from VE properly understood. Thirdly, one could argue that *neither* is the fundamental truth and we should derive both from a third unified theory.

I've come to think the third option is best. My aim is to defend this thought after explaining why evidentialism and VE in their best forms seem to be converging, but why neither is a satisfying fundamental theory. Here is the plan. After making some preliminary remarks in §2 about how to understand evidentialism and VE, I review in §3 why evidentialism needs virtue, but also show that there is a natural way to understand evidentialism so that virtue needn't be added as an extra component. But I observe that an explanatory problem remains. In §4, I use the lingering troubles for evidentialism and VE to argue that we shouldn't use one as the foundation for the other, but simultaneously derive both as secondary theories from a third theory. §5 describes that theory—a novel form of *rationalism*—and how it grounds evidence and virtue.

## 2. Formulating Evidentialism and Virtue Epistemology

Evidentialism is a theory of epistemic justification, and in the first instance *propositional justification* (i.e., justification one possesses to believe or suspend on a proposition, even if one doesn't do so). VE, by contrast, started as a theory of knowledge, and gradually became a comprehensive theory of epistemic normativity (centrally including *doxastic justification*, the status of justifiedness that attaches to doxastic attitudes when properly formed). It is controversial whether knowledge is partly constituted by or even entails justification.<sup>2</sup> It is hence unclear whether evidentialism and VE must compete.

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<sup>1</sup> See Cloos (2015), Lord (2018), Lord and Sylvan (2019), Schmidt (2019), Sosa (forthcoming), Sosa and Sylvan (2018), and my efforts in Sylvan (2017) to help responsibilist VE (but as I clarify in (2020a) and (2020b: n.20), I am not a virtue epistemologist at the fundamental level). This trend follows a better-known tradition of attempts to integrate evidentialism and reliabilism; see Alston (1988), Comesaña (2010), and Goldman (2011). Since Goldman sometimes calls reliabilism a virtue approach (1993: 274), the two trends might be deemed one.

As Cloos documents, the original defenders of evidentialism haven't followed along. Conee and Feldman agree that acquiring perceptual skills *causes* changes in evidence. But they insist that the justification remains *constituted* by evidence. On his own, Feldman (2003: 75) seems to let skill make a more direct contribution. But in their (2011) response to Goldman (2011), Conee and Feldman say that skills only make a difference by affecting evidence; in their (2008: 91), they also call virtues mere 'background conditions'.

<sup>2</sup> See Kornblith (2009), Goldman (1967, 1975) and Sylvan (2018a).

To develop the thought more, let's further consider how to formulate the views. Evidentialism is a theory of a normative status (epistemic justification), in a broad sense of 'normative' consistent with Feldman (1988, 2000)'s ideas. It could be framed in different ways, since there are different levels at which one can theorize about a normative property. In their first statement of evidentialism, Conee and Feldman (1985/2004: 83) offered it not as a reductive account, but just 'to indicate the kind of justification we take to be characteristically epistemic.' Conee and Feldman (2004: 101) then characterized evidentialism by appealing to supervenience: 'Our bedrock claim is a supervenience thesis. Justification strongly supervenes on evidence.' But as Beddor (2015) compellingly argues, this formulation needs updating owing to the grounding revolution. Supervenience claims are not *explanatory* in the way theories of justification should be.

Following Beddor, we should take the core of evidentialism to be a grounding thesis:

**Evidentialism-PJ:** The total evidence one possesses at *t* grounds the propositional justification for one's doxastic attitudes at *t*.

Evidentialists also embrace a claim about doxastic justification (they call it 'well-foundedness'). *Pure* evidentialists think we can explain doxastic justification purely in terms of propositional justification and *non-normative* factors, of which the *basing relation* is an alleged example:

**Evidentialism-DJ-Pure:** The fact that one's belief that *p* is based on sufficient possessed evidence grounds the fact that one's belief is doxastically justified.

To bring views like Cloos (2015)'s into the fold, we might also acknowledge an *impurely* evidentialist view that appeals not to basing *simpliciter* but rather *proper* basing, where the propriety is not pragmatically encroached upon:

**Evidentialism-DJ-Impure:** The fact that one's belief that *p* is properly based on sufficient possessed evidence grounds the fact that one's belief is doxastically justified.

These formulations reveal two underappreciated places where evidentialists can acknowledge virtue-theoretic insights: in understanding (i) the *possession* of sufficient evidence and (ii) (*proper*) *basing* on evidence. Evidentialists can allow that manifestations of virtue are *necessary* for possessing and properly basing one's belief on sufficient evidence. But they can achieve this without accepting VE. Not all necessary conditions are grounds. So evidentialists may grant the necessary link while denying that virtue figures in the *analysis* of possession and proper basing.

A final point of flexibility is worth noting. Conee and Feldman accept a kind of mentalism on which one's evidence consists in certain *non-factive mental states*. But this is not entailed by the formulations of evidentialism above. One could instead take evidence to consist in *propositions* or *facts*. It is also consistent with the formulations to understand possession in terms of *factive mental states* like seeing that *p*. One could even follow Williamson (2000) and invoke knowledge if it is not constituted by justification. Conee and Feldman won't like this view. But it deserves the name 'evidentialism' unless that term is defined to require reference to the two.

What about VE? Again, VE focuses first on *knowledge*. Conflict only looms if one accepts that knowledge is grounded in justification before being grounded in virtue. Still, Sosa (2015, 2017) is clear that he wants to ground justification in virtue, and Zagzebski's larger project is fully understanding epistemic normativity. Hence VE makes two claims:

**VE-K:** Believing accurately as a manifestation of intellectual virtue grounds knowing.

**VE-DJ:** Believing (perhaps not accurately) as a manifestation of intellectual virtue grounds doxastically justified belief.

Zagzebski and Sosa then disagree about how to understand intellectual virtues. Sosa sees them as competences. Zagzebski (1996) sees them as motivationally rich character traits. Although Sosa (2015)

acknowledges insights in Zagzebski, his fundamental building block is competence. Similarly, while Zagzebski agrees that reliability matters, she gives it only derivative significance.

Even understood in this way, there are options for making VE and evidentialism consistent. We can distinguish *direct* and *indirect* grounding and have a direct VE and an indirect evidentialism or *vice versa*. One might hold that justified beliefs are first grounded in manifestations of virtue, and then ground virtues in evidence-sensitive dispositions. Or one might ground justified belief in proper basing on possessed evidence, but then ground possession and proper basing in virtue (see Sylvan and Sosa (2018)). Old literature overlooks these possibilities. They give ways to escape problems for both views without abandoning the letter of either, as we'll see.

### 3. Why Evidence Needs Virtue (and *Vice Versa*)

#### 3.1. Problems for Evidentialism from VE

Evidentialism has long faced pressure from apparent counterexamples that seem neatly explained by VE. But these examples don't refute core evidentialist theses. They only give further reason to understand *possession* and *basing* so that both entail (but are not constituted by) manifestations of virtue. Along the way, however, we will see other problems that suggest we might want to derive core evidentialist theses as secondary truths from deeper rationalist roots.

Let's consider some counterexamples from virtue epistemologists. The examples divide into three groups. Firstly, some examples suggest that a belief can fit one's evidence but be unjustified owing to one's epistemically blameworthy ignorance of other easily acquirable evidence; call such cases 'Ignorant Thinker' cases, where 'ignorant' has its ordinary normative sense. Secondly, some examples suggest that a belief can fit one's evidence but be unjustified because of the vicious way in which one bases it on the evidence. Thirdly, some cases suggest that evidence isn't necessary for justified belief, and that virtue alone does the work.

Ignorant Thinker cases are as old as evidentialism, though the early cases didn't merit quite such a pejorative label. Conee and Feldman (1985/2004: 89) considered a case from Kornblith (1983):

HEADSTRONG PHYSICIST: '[Consider] a headstrong young physicist who is unable to tolerate criticism. After presenting a paper to his colleagues, the physicist pays no attention to the devastating objection of a senior colleague. The physicist, obsessed with his own success, fails even to hear the objection, which consequently has no impact on his beliefs.'

They thought the example was underspecified and offered a dilemma: either the physicist realized his colleague objected but didn't hear the details, or he was lost in thought and didn't realize an objection was being made. In the first specification, they say—reasonably—that evidentialism doesn't make the wrong prediction.<sup>3</sup> In the second, they say his relevant beliefs *are* justified.

Perhaps that response is tolerable, but more recent Ignorant Thinker cases seem less comfortably addressed in this way. Consider a case from Miracchi (2019: 422):

NUNES MEMO: A Trump supporter has just read the Nunes Memo, which alleges that the FBI inappropriately surveilled the 2016 Trump Campaign. Because he does not read or listen to the 'lying liberal media', he is aware of no reason to doubt that the highly redacted memo supports the conclusion it alleges. He believes the conclusion on this basis.

Miracchi suggests the subject's objectionably limited evidence does support his conclusion, but that his belief is unjustified. Conee and Feldman's response is harder to accept here.

Perhaps one could try to use the first horn of their dilemma and insist that there is relevant evidence the Trump supporter has that blocks support for the conclusion (e.g., he knows there are many other news outlets that give contrary evidence). But we can extend the case so that he is so deep within his echo chamber that he would be incapable of responding to this evidence even if he were exposed to the 'fake news' outlets that present it. The intuition remains.

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<sup>3</sup> See Conee and Feldman (1985/2004: 90).

Evidentialism can address such cases if it rejects Conee and Feldman's views about reasons, possession and proper basing. Consider the approach from my (2012: 165-6; 2014: Ch.5; 2017: 142-5) according to which justified and rational beliefs are beliefs that manifest *respect for truth*.<sup>4</sup> I glossed respect for truth in a way that is consistent with the letter of evidentialism. To manifest full respect for truth, a believer must manifest *sensitivity to objective evidential relations*, where these are relations of objective truth-indication. The Trump supporter does not manifest sensitivity to objective evidential relations.<sup>5</sup> His evidence is not objectively good. Even if it were, it would be an accident that he forms a belief that fits objectively good evidence, given his insensitivity.

Admittedly, the second point only directly secures the prediction that the Trump supporter's belief is *doxastically* unjustified, and some might dislike the first point's appeal to *objectively* good evidence. But I am unsure there is a clear intuition about propositional justification if we stipulate that he has only positive (objectively good?) evidence. Clearly, we should say something negative. But if we stipulate that he has only objectively good evidence (a surprising thought!), perhaps we should blame the *agent* for *earlier acts* which put him in his echo chamber. We could then grant that there is propositional justification within the echo chamber and explain the intuition differently.<sup>6</sup>

Even if one stipulates that the Trump supporter has only good evidence and still intuits that he lacks propositional justification, other moves are available. A reasons-firster could first ground doxastic justification in sensitivity to objective evidential relations, and then explain propositional justification in terms of doxastic justification in the manner of Turri (2010). Conee and Feldman won't like this. But we shouldn't be ideal theorists about propositional justification. Psychological limitations on what a person can believe with doxastic justification are limitations on what they have propositional justification to believe. This point doesn't entail VE.

Similar ideas apply to the second class of alleged counterexamples (from Turri (2010)). Here we are meant to imagine that one has sufficient evidence but heeds it by reasoning poorly. In response, we can deny that believing for good reasons is just a matter of believing on the basis of propositions that *happen to correspond* to good reasons. One must *comply* with reasons to get justified by them, by manifesting sensitivity to the relevant reason-relations. One manifests no such sensitivity here.

The final class of examples can't clearly be addressed in similar ways. These cases are meant to show that heeding evidence is *unnecessary* for justified belief. While externalists have long defended this conclusion about animal knowledge and some cases of memory belief,<sup>7</sup> some of the best examples are new, like this case from Srinivasan (forthcoming):

RACIST DINNER TABLE: 'Nour, a young British woman of Arab descent, is invited to dinner at the home of a white friend from university. The host, Nour's friend's father, is polite and welcoming to Nour. He is generous with the food and wine, and asks Nour a series of questions about herself. Everyone laughs and talks amiably. As Nour comes away, however, she is unable to shake the feeling that her friend's father is racist against Arabs. But replaying the evening in her head she finds it impossible to recover just what actions on the host's part could be thought to be racist, or what would justify her belief in the host's racism. If pressed, Nour would say she just had a strong feeling that her host was racist: that she 'just knows'. In fact the host is racist...and as a result did treat Nour in ways subtly different to how he would have

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<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging Sylvan (2018b) as an influence, Miracchi (2019: §3.1, n.19) and (forthcoming: §3) expands her knowledge-first VE to include the concept of *proper practical respect* for knowledge. But she continues to understand knowledge as the 'aim' or 'objective' of believing, in line with Miracchi (2014, 2015). By contrast, my notion of respect was from the outset understood as the basis for an alternative to such *teleological* epistemologies; see Sylvan (2012, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2020). Any aim-based notion of competence cannot, I believe, coherently play a *fundamental* role in an overall theory which also invokes the Kantian notion of respect in its core normative story. But since acts, attitudes, and competences needn't be understood in terms of *aims* but rather in terms of *constitutive norms* or *values to be respected*, it remains possible to invoke a non-teleological notion of competent action or attitude-formation. The appeal to the competences of Reason below is an example.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Lord (2018), Lord and Sylvan (2019), Mantel (2018), and Sylvan and Sosa (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Compare Smith (1983) on culpable ignorance.

<sup>7</sup> See Goldman (1999) and Sosa (2007).

treated a non-Arab guest. And in fact Nour is subconsciously sensitive to this subtly racist behaviour. It is this subconscious sensitivity that lead to her belief that her host is racist.’<sup>8</sup>

Srinivasan claims that Nour is justified in believing that the host is racist in virtue of her ‘capacity to dependably get on to the truth’ about whether some behavior was racist. She thinks such cases are structurally parallel to BonJour (1980)’s clairvoyance cases, supporting the conclusion that one can be justified just by manifesting a disposition to hit the truth.

I’m unsure the cases are parallel. Nour had access to indicators (hence evidence) of racism: the indication relations were just subtle and hard-to-articulate. While she responded by a spontaneous sensitivity whose underlying structure is opaque, she was still justified because she picked up on the indicators, as a manifestation of sensitivity to them. We wouldn’t do justice to Nour’s insight if we denied that she picked up on genuine indicators of racism. It is not clear that a subject who wasn’t picking up on them would be justified. BonJour’s Norman is meant to have *no* indicating evidence.<sup>9</sup>

Still, a lingering concern remains: arguably the evidence isn’t doing the real work. Even if Nour had sufficient evidence, her belief seems justified in virtue of a sensitivity that is pre-evidential. It is hard to believe her sensitivity has merely causal relevance.<sup>10</sup> The relevance seems constitutive.

This challenge can be strengthened by considering basic beliefs like one’s belief that  $1+1=2$ . As Sosa (2007) argues, mere seemings don’t plausibly explain justification any more than mere beliefs do. While one might instead claim that factive rational insight makes evident a perfect reason here, the status of  $\langle 1+1=2 \rangle$ ’s evidentness requires epistemic explanation. Plausibly, certain rational capacities *both* underpin this evidentness *and* explain why one’s belief is justified.

### 3.2. Why Virtue Isn’t Enough on its Own

Must we then accept Sosa-style VE? No, partly because it has problems of its own, and partly because there is a rationalist alternative with similar advantages but without similar problems.

Sosa’s key concept is the idea of a *competence* to succeed, where doxastic success is true belief. Succeeding as a manifestation of competence is *aptness*, and knowledge is apt belief. In Sosa (2007), competences were understood as dispositions to succeed relative to suitable situations and assuming the performer is in suitable shape. Such competences can be equally manifest by what Sosa calls mere cognitive ‘functionings’ like passive *attractions to assent* to propositions. Sosa (2007)’s corresponding account of the higher kind of epistemic normativity—what he then called ‘reflective knowledge’—just required *knowingly* hitting the mark of truth through competence, where the higher-order knowledge manifests fundamentally the same kind of competence.

This early theory doesn’t give a satisfying explanation of what Norman is missing. First-order apt belief is no help: an unenlightened clairvoyant’s beliefs qualify as apt at the first order. But if first-order aptness is unsatisfying, it is unclear why apt belief aptly noted would be much better. Can’t second-order apt beliefs be just as blind as first-order ones?

Sosa’s view has been twice revised since 2007, but the problem remains. In his (2010), Sosa revised the view so that high-grade knowledge requires not merely second-order aptness, but that one’s first-order belief be *guided* to aptness by a second-order apt judgment. The trouble here is that the higher-order judgment can be just as blind as the first-order judgment. It is hard to believe that the highest epistemic achievement is the blind leading the blind.

Sosa (2015)’s view may sound better. He there understands high-grade knowledge as partly constituted by a mental state *different in kind* from the one constituting animal knowledge. He distinguishes two kinds of belief: mere ‘functional’ beliefs and *judgmental* beliefs, paradigmatically expressed by active judgments. But although Sosa takes judgmental beliefs to constitute a different kind of mental state, they remain subject to fundamentally the same kind of evaluation: judgmental knowledge is achieved when one affirms the truth as a manifestation of a competence to affirm only if

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<sup>8</sup> Srinivasan (forthcoming: 1-2).

<sup>9</sup> I think Norman’s judgment is not justified unless the case is expanded to make clear that it manifests a rational capacity. I do, however, think it is possible for Norman to have animal knowledge even without this detail (though see Goldberg and Matheson (forthcoming) for arguments against this view).

<sup>10</sup> See Conee and Feldman (2004), (2008), and (2011) for this tack.

one's affirmation would be apt. A person could have and exercise such a competence while affirming in a subjectively reckless way. Norman, for example, could aptly affirm that he has a clairvoyant power and then aptly affirm that Iggy Pop is in Detroit in the endeavor to make an apt affirmation.

A concessive response is to combine VE and evidentialism. One could follow Sylvan and Sosa (2018), directly invoking competences to believe  $p$  only if  $p$  is supported by one's evidence, and piggybacking on evidentialism's story. This move yields convergence with the sophisticated evidentialist view considered earlier. But it doesn't provide a deep solution if one remains within the framework of reliabilist VE. For it is unclear why competences to believe truth *with the help of evidence* should be epistemically better than equally reliable competences to believe truth *whether or not* one has evidence.

What is needed, I suggest, is a view founded on a different kind of normativity than performance normativity, which bears a different relation to truth than the means-end relation of *aiming*.

#### 4. Convergence and the Task of Unification

Let's take stock. Evidentialism can withstand VE's challenges if it understands some of its moving parts in virtue-friendly ways—especially the *possession* and *basing* relations. One compelling option begins by taking the fundamental notion of evidence to be the ordinary notion of facts that stand in the *objective-evidence-for* relation to conclusions. The theory can then understand a subject's having a justified belief as her having a belief based properly on sufficient evidence she *possesses*, where:

- *possessing* evidence  $E$  for a conclusion  $h$  is a matter of
  - (1) having access to the fact that constitutes that evidence,
  - and
  - (2) being disposed to treat  $E$  as evidence for  $p$  as a manifestation of sensitivity to the kind of evidential relation holding between  $E$  and  $h$ ;<sup>11</sup>
- *competence* with the evidence-for relation between  $E$  and  $h$  is a matter of being disposed to form the attitudes to  $h$ -like hypotheses that are fitting when  $E$ -like facts obtain;
- belief in  $h$  is *properly based* on  $E$  when one holds it because of  $E$ , as a manifestation of the aforementioned competence.

Although I think this view may be extensionally satisfactory, it faces explanatory challenges. It is unclear that the justifiedness of basic beliefs like the belief that  $1+1=2$  is *fundamentally explained* by evidence. It rather seems that exercise of a rational capacity simultaneously explains *both* the evidentness of  $\langle 1+1=2 \rangle$  *and* the belief's status as doxastically justified.

This concern is connected to a further challenge that emerges from the discussion of VE. More must be said about evidence-sensitive competences. It doesn't seem right to understand them as *mere* dispositions: this invites the problems for reliabilist VE. A natural thought is that these competences are *rational capacities* of the kind that also explain how propositions like  $\langle 1+1=2 \rangle$  become evident.

Explaining the difference between these capacities and mere dispositions to hit some mark requires avoiding the problem of clairvoyance. This problem looks harder considered alongside the problems for evidentialism. Initially, it seemed VE might avoid this problem by mimicking evidentialism. Yet Srinivasan's question becomes pressing: what is the difference between the clairvoyant and someone with a groundless rational intuition of arithmetic truth? Experiential evidence doesn't make the difference. All we have is the *seeming*, which is too belief-like to justify.

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<sup>11</sup> One might think that it is possible to have  $E$  as good evidence for believing  $P$  without having the competence to treat  $E$  as evidence for  $P$ . But I argue against this view in Sylvan (2015). I agree it is possible to have  $E$  as evidence in these cases, but not *as sufficient evidence for believing  $P$* .

The lingering problems for evidentialism and VE make me wary of explaining their convergence by founding one on the other. I suggest we seek a third theory that can simultaneously provide foundations for each as secondary theories—in particular, a *rationalist* theory.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Rationalist Foundations for Evidence and Virtue

The theory begins with a simple idea and pushes it farther than the traditional name suggests is possible. The simple idea can be grasped by considering Srinivasan's question about the difference between the intuition that  $2+2=4$  and Norman's belief. The rationalist's answer is that the former is a *manifestation of reason*, while the latter is not, where reason is understood as a fundamental mental capacity. More generally, rationalists claim that reason confers the status of evidence on propositions and also confers the status of virtue on dispositions (including the ones involved in *possession* and *proper basing*).

I will first explain the rationalist account of evidence, then the rationalist account of virtue, and then show how these accounts yield the convergence of evidentialism and VE. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully defend rationalism. Here I suggest only that *if* evidentialism and VE need revisions that lead to extensional convergence, then rationalism should underpin both as secondary theories.

### 4.1. Rationalist Foundations for Evidence (and a Derivative Evidentialism)

My rationalism is inspired not by 17<sup>th</sup> century metaphysicians, but rather by Kantian ethicists with compelling analyses of practical normativity—viz., Korsgaard (2009) and Markovits (2014). A virtue of the view is that it smoothly integrates with this other Kantian project.

The first step toward the view is not specifically Kantian or rationalist. It involves defining normative reasons as potential inputs to good reasoning, where 'reasoning' is understood broadly to include transitions like the transition from seeing that  $p$  to judging that  $p$ .<sup>13</sup> It then adds a distinctively rationalist claim about the source of the standards of good reasoning:

**Kantian Rationalism:** The norms of reasoning are constitutive norms of the power of reason—i.e., norms one must be minimally disposed to follow to count as engaging in reasoning, or possessing the power of reason, at all.

In the case of reason's *theoretical* side, the constitutive norms include principles of deductive reasoning and—following Strawson (1952) and Bonjour (1998) on induction—fundamental principles of ampliative reasoning. On a natural extension inspired by Peacocke (2000)'s moderate rationalism, one could also count the introduction and exit rules constitutive of some acquired concepts among these norms, to explain the rationality of other transitions. Since constitutive norms of theoretical reason are plausibly *a priori*, this view explains why reason-relations seem *a priori*.

What is evidence? The notion of evidence is Janus-faced in a way that makes the full rationalist story multifaceted. On the one hand, there is the *relational* notion of evidence as a fact that bears an *evidence-for* relation to a proposition. To be evidence in this sense is to be a theoretical reason for believing the proposition. A theoretical reason is, in turn, a potential input to good theoretical reasoning. Different kinds of evidence will be distinguished by the class to which the constitutive norms of the relevant reasoning belong. Admittedly, the ordinary notion of evidence seems more restrictive, so that it is only proper to call inputs to good *ampliative* reasoning 'evidence'. But evidentialism always invoked a wider notion, making it hard to distinguish from reasons-based views that sound broader.

The fundamental sort of evidence in this ordinary relational sense is *objective*: evidence consists in worldly facts. But only *possessed* evidence can do much work in epistemology. Possession is a further work of reason. A person *possesses* a fact  $E$  as evidence for a proposition  $p$  only if that person is not just minimally attuned to the relevant evidential relation, but is disposed to treat the evidence in the right way, by forming the attitudes it favors. This disposition can be *masked* if one is sleepy,

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<sup>12</sup> Srinivasan (forthcoming) considers a theory she calls 'rationalist', which only addresses one of her cases. But it is a limited rationalism that just invokes *a priori* justification for moral propositions. My theory explains more, by being less limited.

<sup>13</sup> See Gregory (2016), Silverstein (2016) and Way (2017).

distracted, or whatever. But possession requires real grasp of relevant evidence-for relations. That grasp is constituted by reason-based dispositions to think according to reason's constitutive standards.

Rational attunement of this kind is one necessary condition on possessing a fact E as a certain kind of evidence for p. It must also be true that this fact is itself evident to one (or in a position to become so). Here we encounter a different use of the notion of evidence. This use appears when people talk about one's 'body of evidence' in abstraction from the evidence-for relations that its members bear to propositions. What is one's 'body of evidence'? A narrow view would be that it is the set of propositions whose truth is evident to one. A wider view would be that it is the set of propositions that one's reason is *in a position* to make evident to one.

A full rationalist picture must also explain what it is for a proposition to be *evident* to a person. Here we can adopt Kantian thinking familiar through McDowell (1995). One might have wanted to ground empirical evidence in sensory experience. But if sensory experience consists in Dretske (2000)'s *simple sensing* of particulars, features, events, and states of affairs reportable by claims of the form 'S sees/hears/smells NP', then it is *not* sufficient to make a part of the world evident to one. I can bear the simple seeing relation to a state of affairs reportable by the proposition that p without seeing that p; I can walk past a street performance, for example, without realizing that it is one. As Kant suggested, sensation provides matter without form. Only reason enables one to transform the simple seeing of parts of a state of affairs into the seeing *that* it obtains. We can use 'experience' in a wider sense to include seeing that p. But seeing that p is a complex state, and the sensory constituent is blind to truth. Only reason enables us to see empirical truths.

Reason also enables us to see non-empirical truths. Here the seeing is *intuition*. In principle, we could imagine reason descreying contingent truths without evident help from sensory matter. Some perception works in this way (e.g., proprioception). But if it is clear BonJour's Norman lacks a justified belief,<sup>14</sup> we cannot suppose Norman deploys reason in this way, where non-evident matter is used to render some truth evident. Hence the difference between Norman and Nour.

With these ideas in hand, we can give a fuller rationalist account of evidence, and derive evidentialism as a secondary truth. We can begin with the non-relational notion of evidence, and invoke that to give a fuller account of the possession of relational evidence:

**Non-Relational Evidence:** E is part of S's evidence =df<sub>metaphysical</sub> E is a member of the set of truths that S's reason is in a position to make evident to S, where the evidentness of a truth to S consists in S's attraction to this truth as a manifestation of S's theoretical reason (where reason may use other materials—e.g., sensations—to generate this attraction).

**Possessed Relational Evidence:** A person S *possesses* E as evidence of some sort for p =df<sub>metaphysical</sub> (1) E is evident to S in the foregoing sense, and (2) S is disposed by reason to treat E as evidence of this sort for p, where this involves S's being disposed to believe p-like propositions when E-like propositions are evident, according to a relevant principle of reason.

*Objective* evidence, in turn, just consists in facts that are potential inputs to good theoretical reasoning, where that is grounded in the foregoing Kantian way.

Whither evidentialism? Consider a rationalist account of justified belief: a belief is doxastically justified iff it manifests the power of theoretical reason. Theoretical reason operates by taking certain facts as input. These are evidence. If reason manifests its power by moving from some facts to a conclusion, the conclusion will be based on evidence. Hence it emerges as a derived truth that a conclusion is justified iff properly based on evidence. But reason is what makes the evidence *evident*.

#### 4.2. *Rationalist Foundations for Virtue (and a Derivative VE)*

Rationalism's ability to subsume evidentialism's good predictions is unsurprising. Rationalism and evidentialism are old friends. But reliabilist VE might seem too different to sustain a lasting friendship with rationalism. Indeed, one might think it clear that virtue is not a rationalist notion. One might

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<sup>14</sup> If we fill in the details of the Norman case so that reason is playing the role, we rightly get a different intuition. This point is a relative of one in Lyons (2009).



hence be skeptical about deriving VE from rationalism. Moreover, one might suspect the greater generality of virtue makes it a better ground for normativity, some of which is unreflective.

The generality of virtue is, however, not a boon if we want to explain the normativity attaching to works of agency and states for which we are properly held accountable. Paperweights and toasters display virtues in the most general sense. It is a virtue of this paperweight that it prevents the paper from flying away when it is windy. It is a virtue of this toaster that it browns the toast just right. Virtues in the general sense are just useful qualities. Yet it is wrong to analyze justified beliefs as beliefs that are produced by virtues in this sense. VE needs a narrower notion.

We could stipulate a narrower notion: namely, the notion of a disposition of a person to enter a desirable state (e.g., true belief). In Sosa's early efforts, intellectual virtues were understood this way. But this way doesn't illuminate the problem of clairvoyance. Nor does it really illuminate animal knowledge, as Sosa (2015) recognizes: a competence to form true beliefs is not *just* a disposition to form them, but rather a *special case* of a disposition to form them. How should we specify this special case? Sosa (2015) offers no answer and takes the notion of competence as primitive. Yet competences are a special case of virtues in the wider sense. A VE analogous to virtue ethics would appeal to virtue and then analyze other normative properties in terms of virtues and non-normative properties.

Rationalism enables us to explain which dispositions are virtues of the relevant sort for explaining normative statuses like justification and rationality. Not just any dispositions will do. We want competences. What makes a disposition a competence? The rationalist story is reminiscent of the account of skill developed by Bradford (2015) and Stanley and Williamson (2017). Competences are *intelligent* dispositions, dispositions 'guided' by reason. But it is best to understand this guidance as consisting in the deployment of reason through the disposition, rather than the occupying of some higher-order state: otherwise the view threatens overintellectualization. The dispositions are dispositions *of reason* in the broad sense needed in a comprehensive rationalism for the theoretical and practical domains. They are intelligent and amount to competences in virtue of this fact.

Whither VE? Consider again the simple rationalist account of justified belief. A belief will be doxastically justified iff it manifests the power of theoretical reason. Theoretical reason does, however, manifest its power through the workings of various dispositions. It works through virtues, though they *count* as virtues in the relevant sense by hailing from reason. Hence it emerges that a belief will be justified iff it manifests certain intellectual virtues. But the relevant virtues are seated in reason. No others are suited to explain justified belief (as the clairvoyant augured).

#### 4.3. *Explaining Convergence and Other Advantages*

From a rationalist account of justified belief, then, we can derive evidentialism and VE in secondary forms. According to rationalism, what fundamentally explains the justifiedness of a given belief is the fact that it manifests the power of theoretical reason. In the case of non-basic beliefs, the power of theoretical reason will always be manifest in one's basing one's belief on independently identifiable evidence. Here rationalism is extensionally equivalent to evidentialism. But it gives a better explanation in the case of basic beliefs. Hence, a belief will be justified in rationalist terms iff it is justified in suitable evidentialist terms, but rationalism is the more fundamental theory.

Parallel claims hold for rationalism and reliabilist VE. Manifestations of reason always work through what VE calls 'competences', but reason is more fundamental. Hence, a belief will be justified in rationalist terms iff it is justified in sophisticated virtue reliabilist terms. Yet rationalism is again the basic theory. It gives a better explanation of the difference between Norman and the person who intuits a necessary truth or enjoys a sensationless perception of contingent truth.

We hence get a derivation of evidentialism and VE as secondary theories and also explain why these theories converge in their best forms. The resulting unified outlook is preferable to a hybrid outlook. Of course, one could also avoid hybridity by trying instead to derive evidentialism from VE or *vice versa*. But these alternatives give worse explanations of some basic beliefs. Moreover, rationalism seamlessly integrates with what is arguably the best approach to practical normativity—viz., Kantianism, which avoids the relativism of Humeanism and the spookiness of non-naturalist

realism, and better explains the normative significance of reasons and rationality than neo-Aristotelianism (which I also suspect invite excessive relativism).<sup>15</sup>

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