DOES KNOWLEDGE ENTAIL JUSTIFICATION?

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Abstract. Robert Audi's Seeing, Knowing, & Doing argues that knowledge does not entail justification, given a broadly externalist conception of knowledge and an access internalist conception of justification, where justification requires the ability to cite one's grounds or reasons. On this view, animals and small children can have knowledge while lacking justification. About cases like these and others, Audi concludes that knowledge does not entail justification. But the access internalist sense of "justification" is but one of at least two ordinary senses of the term. On a broader or looser sense, "justification" means "being in the right" where that involves meeting a standard or norm. I argue that the beliefs of animals and small children can then meet standards or norms associated with truth and knowledge such that their beliefs may count as justified in this broader or looser sense. I then question whether knowledge fails to entail justification on this broader sense.

I. INTRODUCTION

Robert Audi's rich and rewarding book *Seeing, Knowing, & Doing: A Perceptualist Account* updates theses he has pursued over a long and illustrious career, simultaneously adding several new theses as well. I will convey two: the property-process integration thesis, applied to justification; and the thesis that knowledge does not entail justification, given his conception of justification. I think this second thesis is correct. But I'll argue that, in another sense of "justification" in epistemology, it is not so clear that knowledge does not entail justification. Does knowledge entail justification? It depends on what you mean.

II. THE PROPERTY-PROCESS INTEGRATION THESIS

In "Justification, Truth, and Reliability" (1988a), Audi advances the "property-process integration thesis," that there are some properties that are *a priori* known to be understood in terms of a related process, and vice versa. He applies it to justification. Here are the four key elements in Audi's account of justification:

(1) Justifiers. Justifiers are consciously accessible mental states like perceptual experiences.

- (2) The property of being (*prima facie*) justified. That's when a belief is based on a justifier. Justifiers are either grounds (like perceptual experiences) or (possessed) reasons (like other justified beliefs).
- (3) Epistemic principles. Epistemic principles state, in the abstract, when non-normative properties like mental states ground a normative property like being justified. For example, the Perception Principle is the epistemic norm stating how non-normative perceptual experiences ground the normative property of being justified: if it perceptually seems to S as if X is F, then S is prima facie justified in believing that X is F.
- (4) The process of justifying a belief. This is the activity of citing justifiers, given a grasp of epistemic principles, in offering a justification for one's belief, for the belief-worthiness of one's belief, as part of a broader social practice. (1988a: 6–8; 21–22)

Audi's property-process integration thesis is then that (2) and (4) are integrated:

[There is] a conceptual connection between the property of justification (justifiedness) and the process of justification, and [the connection] implies that for every justified belief there is a possible process of justifying the belief by invoking certain properties of it. [This integration] is not only between the *justifiedness* of our beliefs and possible justificatory *processes*, but between it and our *actual practice of justification*. It appears that the basic justificatory elements to which we have appealed are by their nature the sorts of things *that S can cite, given a grasp of ordinary facts and ordinary epistemic principles, in offering a justification*. This usability is crucial because the practice of justification is, if not more fundamental than the property, at least the place where that property is anchored. (Audi 1988a: 21; emphasis added)

The property and the process fit together, Audi says, by being "made for each other—or by each other" (1988a: 22). There is no process of justifying a belief without the property of a belief's being justified, and there is no property of a belief's being justified with the possibility of justifying the belief. That's the *integration* thesis.

More precisely, Audi states the process-property integration thesis as follows: "A belief is justified (has the property of justification) if and only if it has one or more other, non-normative properties such that (i) in virtue of them it is justified, and (ii) citing them can, at least in principle, both show that it is justified and (conceptually) constitute justifying it" (1988a: 6).

This integration thesis entails that justifiers must be internally accessible by introspection or reflection to the individual: "Justifiedness is the kind of property whose possession is based on the sorts of accessible elements appropriate for the process of showing and thereby exhibiting that property" (Audi 2020: 95; cf. 92–93), and "Inaccessible justifiers could hardly serve as the basis of our epistemic practice" (1988a: 29).

But it's not just access to justifiers that makes it possible to justify our beliefs, but also our grasp, however inexplicit, of the epistemic principles. How could

mere citation of justifiers serve the process of justifying our beliefs if our citation were not guided, however inexplicitly, by the principles? We don't just justify our beliefs by citing what are *in fact* justifiers. We cite justifiers *as* justifiers; we cite them as meeting the antecedents of epistemic principles. That's how we *show* that our beliefs are justified, to justify our beliefs *as* justified. Our knowledge of the principles guides the process of justifying beliefs.

If this is Audi's view of what it takes for a subject to justify a belief, then on my interpretation of the view, Audi is committed to the claim that the subject must be a critical reasoner.

What, in general, is critical reasoning? Critical reasoning is reasoning that evaluates, checks, refines and revises reasoning. It is reasoning that is critical of reasoning—it is reasoning about reasoning: higher-level, meta-representational and meta-normative reasoning about lower-level reasoning.

Here's an example. Suppose I currently believe that Tom is coming to the party (a first order belief about Tom and the party). Then I reflect on my belief and ask myself why I am so sure that he is coming (a second order, normative belief about my first order belief and my evidence or reasons). I recall that he told me that he was coming to the party. But then I remember that he often overcommits to social events. I also recall that he must work extra hours this week, usually in the evenings. I then see the fact that he told me he was coming was not a very strong reason to believe that he will attend the party. I conclude that on balance I should not be so sure that he will attend (a second order belief), so I conclude that although he might go to the party, odds are that he won't (a revised first order belief about Tom and the party) (Burge 2013: 10).

Critical reasoning is this kind of reasoning. Mature human adults do it all the time. We engage in critical reasoning when giving a proof, formulating a plan, constructing a theory, or engaging in debate (Burge 2013: 74). Critical reasoning is the kind of reasoning that Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, for example, have spent so much time investigating, the kind of reasoning that they say evolved to facilitate argumentation (Mercier and Sperber 2017). When aimed at what to do instead of what to believe, it is the kind of reasoning that underwrites practical reasoning.

An important consequence of the idea that having justification requires the capacity for critical reason is that having justification comes with language and *critical practices*: having epistemic and normative concepts, giving and asking for reasons, praising beliefs as justified—praising beliefs of one's own and of others as rightly held—and criticizing beliefs as not justified—criticizing one's own beliefs and those of others as beliefs that should not be held (Audi 2020: 96).

The idea is not simply that justification *is* normative, but also an account of *why* justification is normative. Justification is normative because one has a duty—an obligation—to submit one's beliefs to critical evaluation and to defend one's beliefs when challenged. Audi has an ethics of belief (1988a: 1).

As a result, very young children, who lack awareness of grounds and reasons as justifiers, who lack epistemic concepts and so cannot appreciate epistemic principles and apply them to cases, and so cannot yet engage in critical practices, do not have justified beliefs even if they engage in first-order reasoning, belief formation, and revision. Since they do not have the capacities for critical reason, they do not (yet)

have a duty—an obligation—to evaluate and defend their beliefs: "[Very young children] do not have the appropriate combination of concepts and responsiveness needed to achieve justification. [Epistemic standards are not yet] standards that they should meet (Audi 2001: 31), and "'Justified' and 'unjustified' (and . . . the concepts they express) apply to creatures only when their level of conceptual development makes them eligible for a certain kind of criticism and they can be in some way held responsible for being justified in certain beliefs" (Audi 2020: 91). Very young children are without justification. Their beliefs are non-justified, neither justified nor unjustified (Audi 1997: 230–232; 2013: 111). Audi's thesis is not just that *someone* must be able to justify a belief for it to be justified; his thesis is that *the believer* must have the ability to do so.

III. KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION?

Does knowledge entail justification on Audi's conception of justification? Audi argues that it does not. "Knowledge can . . . occur without justification" (Audi 2020: 66), for ". . . justification and knowledge are grounded in quite different ways . . ." (1988b: 113).

How does Audi think knowledge is grounded? Audi prefers a reliable basis view of knowledge. It is "fruitful to proceed," he writes, "on the plausible view that knowledge is reliably grounded true belief, where (at least in the case of empirical knowledge) this implies an appropriately reliable causal connection between the fact that *P* and the belief that *P*" (2020: 61) Here he leans on work by Fred Dretske, Alvin Goldman, and William Alston.

Now as many epistemologists have noticed, a subject can form a belief based on a reliable basis without being able to justify their belief in Audi's sense, without the reliable basis even being conscious, let alone accessible to the subject. Hence, on this conception of knowledge and Audi's conception of justification, a subject can have knowledge without justification. The two epistemic statuses are grounded in quite different ways, so it should be no surprise that knowledge can occur without justification.

Is this plausible? Are there concrete cases that should lead us to agree with Audi that knowledge does not entail justification? I shall review cases that Audi has offered over his career. I start with animals and young children.

As noted, children lack justification on Audi's conception given their lack of conceptual sophistication. But this does not block meeting the requirements for knowledge: "I am thinking of knowledge without justification as a natural phenomenon, quite likely exhibited by children who have begun to acquire knowledge but do not have the appropriate combination of concepts and responsiveness needed to achieve justification" (Audi 2001: 31). Audi applies this result not only to perception, but also to testimony. A small child can acquire knowledge from testimony, he thinks, without possessing the necessary justification to accept the speaker's testimony (Audi 1997: 414–416; 2020: 201).

Other reliabilists about knowledge like Dretske and Goldman frequently include animals in this category. They surely lack the ability to justify in Audi's sense, so surely lack justified beliefs in Audi's sense. And at least higher non-human

animals with propositional attitudes know a great deal about their environments. This shows that knowledge is, as it were, more evolutionarily "primitive" than justification. Audi states, "Knowledge is the more primitive case, and in having it we are more similar to higher animals than we are in having justification. Having that seems to come with communication and critical practices. The ability simply to know is more primitive than the ability to go through a process of adducing the grounds on which we know" (2020: 96). Without going so far as to accept a sensitive grounds theory of knowledge as Audi suggests, it is very plausible that animals and young children know many things, despite lacking the resources for justified belief on Audi's conception. Hence, I agree that, on Audi's conception of justification, knowledge does not require justification. It's an easy verdict.

Audi has also offered several cases of adult knowledge without justification. Laurence BonJour famously argued that reliable indicator theories of knowledge would imply knowledge without "access" justification. BonJour thought that that was a point against such theories of knowledge (1985). Audi took those cases—as well as cases of idiot savants and chicken-sexers—to be a point in favor of divorcing justification from knowledge (2010: 270–271; 1988b: 112). Audi sees the recent discussion of blindsight as allowing for just such a possibility, that is, of knowledge without accessible grounds that the knower might cite to defend their belief (Audi 2020: 66–67). He imagines the implantation of a reliable ability to repair lawnmowers with the corresponding true beliefs about what steps to take, but without the ability to justify any of those beliefs. Couldn't the repairman "just know" those propositions without having any ability to adduce grounds or reasons in favor of those beliefs? (Audi 2020: 89–90).

If you are wondering about the possibility of these cases, imagine instead what God could do. Couldn't God directly give us beliefs that are so reliably produced as to count as knowledge, but without any of the corresponding conscious sensory states or reasons required to justify our beliefs (Audi 2020: 90–91)?

Audi also proposes a case of forgotten evidence as one where the subject continues to have knowledge, knowledge originally grounded in accessible evidence, but for which the subject now lacks justification, for the evidence is entirely forgotten, so the subject can no longer justify their belief by appeal to the justifying evidence (Audi 2015: 236–237).

Controversially, Audi goes on to argue that one might have perceptual knowledge even when one's justification is defeated by a misleading undercutting defeater. Suppose one is in normal lighting conditions and vividly sees a green tree as a green tree. But then suppose your credible friends convince you that you have often been deceived by bleached trees in green light. Your justification to believe the tree is green is now defeated. Suppose you continue to believe that the tree is green even so. Does that mean that you do not know that the tree is green? Here Audi allows for a negative answer: the misleading defeater, though it takes your justification away and might undermine the rationality of your belief, need not remove your knowledge. Though it may be preferable from the point of view of justification to suspend belief, you may know even so.

I am convinced by the cases of animals and small children. What about Audi's other cases? While the forgotten memory case persuades me, as it has many others,

the BonJour type cases are complicated, including God's direct implantation of reliably true belief. I shall return to them. I suspend judgment about defeat cases, though the current consensus leans against their possibility.

IV. TWO ORDINARY SENSES OF "JUSTIFICATION" IN EPISTEMOLOGY

In this section I make two claims. First, in English there are two ordinary and normative senses of "justification" at work in epistemology (they are not just "technical" notions). The first adheres close to Audi's account. The second does not. Second, I shall review whether knowledge entails justification on the second sense.

What, then, is the ordinary sense or senses of "justification"? To find the "ordinary" concept expressed by any word in English, there is no better place to start than a good dictionary, like the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The *OED* lists six main senses. The first is from Christian theology. The second and third are obsolete. The fifth is from law. The sixth is from printing. The fourth is straightforwardly relevant to epistemology: "4a. The *action* of or result of *showing* something to be just, right, or reasonable; vindication. Also: the *grounds* on which this is done; a *justifying* circumstance; a good reason (emphases added)." The activity of justifying is in the first half and the justifiers one would cite when justifying is in the second. Relatedly, here is the *OED* on "justify": "*Justify*. 3a. to make good (an argument, statement, or opinion); to confirm or support by attestation or evidence; to corroborate, prove, verify. 6. Of an event, decision, etc.: to support the truth or value of, validate; to provide a reason for, warrant, necessitate; to prove (an action or reaction) to have been right, proper, or reasonable."

Audi's account of the property of justification adheres to these notions. What the *OED* lacks, and what Audi contributes, is the connection between the process, the justifiers that ground the process, the property of a belief's being justified, and the social practice that anchors the property. Audi's integration thesis is that the property does not yet apply to beliefs, even if the grounds are present, until the subject has an appreciation for the epistemic principles and so is an appropriate target for our social practice of giving and asking for grounds or reasons, until, that is, the subject can justify the belief.

Audi's justification (property)-justifying (process) integration thesis looks like a good philosophical explication of an ordinary sense of "justification." Now the dictionary obviously does not commit to ontological internalism: it takes philosophical reflection to make a case for that. But the *OED* really does seem to commit to *access* internalism. How could you provide grounds or reasons that justify a belief without conscious access to the grounds or reasons? Let's accept, for the sake of argument, that Audi's account aligns with an ordinary sense of "justification," the *access* sense. A child's belief isn't justified until the child can justify her belief, and she can't do that until she has access to her grounds as grounds, as antecedents to epistemic principles. A child's belief isn't justified until she is a participant in the practice of giving and asking for grounds or reasons.

But there is another ordinary sense of "justification" in epistemology which many readers will readily recognize:

Justification = meeting a standard or norm, being in the right

Audi's sense includes this sense, for to be able to cite accessible grounds or reasons would be *one* way of meeting a standard or norm, one way of being in the right in epistemology. It is just not the *only* way.

Let's consider more linguistic evidence. Here is "justification" from the *American Heritage Dictionary*: "1. a. The act of justifying. b. The condition or fact of being justified."

In this definition we start with process and then turn to the property (the *OED* starts with the process and then turns to justifiers). This definition suggests a possible separation. Maybe a belief can be justified independently of the believer's capacity to justify it? I will explore this momentarily.

First an argument to show that to be justified is to be in the right. Suppose it is analytic that to justify is to show that something is justified. What does the *AHD* say about what it is to justify that goes beyond this analytic point? Here is the first sense from the *AHD*: "1. To demonstrate or prove to be just, right, or valid: *justified each budgetary expense as necessary*." So to justify is to demonstrate or prove (to show) that something is just, right, or valid. Simplifying, to justify is to show that something is in the right. So if to justify is to show that something is justified, and to justify is to show that something is in the right, it follows that to be justified is to be in the right. And what is it to be in the right? Here are the first three senses of "right" from the *AHD*:

- 1. Conforming with or conformable to justice, law, or morality.
- 2. In accordance with fact, reason, or truth; correct: the right answer.
- 3. Fitting, proper, or appropriate.

These three senses of "right" have in common that to be right (to be in the right) is to meet a norm or standard. "Justification" then means "to meet (to be in accord with) a norm or standard, to be fitting or proper."

I now argue that this sense does not have an access requirement. Consider various cases from other domains. When we are freed of original sin, we are justified in the eyes of God. To be free of original sin meets a standard. Meeting that standard makes us justified. In law, your actions are justified when legal. In printing, your text is justified when it lines up against a standard. This article is *full* justified. When I composed this paper, I used *left* justification. Left, right, or full justification sets a standard for the presentation of text.

In these cases, the person or thing that meets the norm does not have to be able to show that the standard is met to meet the norm. You can be free of original sin without being able to show that you are or even knowing any theology. Your actions can be legal without knowing the law, let alone being able to defend yourself in court. A book certainly does not have to be able to show that it is full justified to be so justified. Your pupil can dilate just as it should; dilation can be the fitting or appropriate response. But nobody needs to know that, or have access to it, for it to be so.

So couldn't a belief be held in accordance with fact, reason, or truth independently of a believer's ability to show that it is so? Couldn't a belief be fitting, proper, or appropriate independently of the ability to cite accessible grounds or reasons as reasons to believe that the belief is fitting, proper, or appropriate? Couldn't a belief be fitting, proper, or appropriate independently of our social practice of giving and asking for grounds or reasons for our beliefs? Couldn't an animal's or a young child's belief be in the right, fitting or proper? Why insist that the only sense of "justification" for beliefs in English requires the ability to access accessible grounds or reasons to show that the belief meets certain epistemic principles? Why not allow, as the dictionary seems to allow, a sense of "justification" for beliefs—where justification still involves meeting norms or standards—that is not as demanding as the sense that requires the ability to justify one's belief?

I am not arguing that English goes against Audi's thesis but that he is half right, half wrong. I am arguing that there are two ordinary, normative senses of "justification." One requires conscious access to grounds, an awareness of epistemic principles, and an ability to justify, grounded in our social practice of giving and asking for grounds or reasons. Your beliefs are not justified in this sense unless you can justify them. This is a perfectly good conception consistent with English. *This* sense does not apply to animals and small children. There is another sense of the word, however, that does apply to animals and small children, that does not require the ability to justify. It's this less demanding sense, that exists in English, that I am arguing that Audi's account does not capture.

This less demanding sense is common in epistemology. This is how process reliabilists such as Alvin Goldman and Jack Lyons use "justified" and "justifiedness" while happily applying it to the beliefs of animals and small children. For reliablists, to be justified is for a belief to be based on a reliable belief forming process.

This is how many ontological internalists use the word when they say that small children who form beliefs based on perceptual experiences have justified beliefs, even though the children lack the ability to appreciate that this is so. Beliefs that "fit" experiences are justified; being justified is the *fitting* response. These ontological internalists might very well agree with Audi on the content and the *a priori* status of epistemic principles; they disagree that the principles only apply when the subject can appreciate and apply the principles so as to justify their beliefs to themselves or another.

This less demanding sense is also at work in strong externalist views associated with Clayton Littlejohn (2014) and Timothy Williamson (forthcoming), among others. The idea is that knowledge is the norm of belief. Beliefs are supposed to be knowledge; when they are, they are in the right (they have met the relevant norm or standard). So when a belief is knowledge, it is justified (given our looser, broader sense). On the assumption that knowledge does not require the ability to justify the belief, justification does not require the ability to justify.

Then there is a camp of epistemologists who think we can ground "justification"—meeting a norm or standard having to do with truth and knowledge—in the *functions* of beliefs and/or the functions of belief-forming capacities. Alvin Plantinga (1995) argued that our belief-forming capacities, like perception, have the function of producing true beliefs. When our belief-forming capacities are

operating as they should, as they were designed to operate (when they are, in his terms, "functioning properly"), and their design is a reliable one (such that, in normal conditions, the belief-forming capacity will reliably fulfill its function and so reliably produce true beliefs), then the beliefs so formed are *warranted*. To form a belief this way is to form a belief the *right* way, the way beliefs *should* be formed (or sustained), given the capacity's function. To form a belief this way is then to meet a norm or standard grounded in the function of the belief-forming capacity and its design. To form a belief is way is then to meet a norm or standard—it is for the belief to be justified, in the broad, but still ordinary, sense of the term "justified."

Plantinga chose to use "warrant"—an old term in epistemology—instead of "justification" because he thought that everyone used "justification" the way Audi does—as a notion tied up with responsibility and the ability to show that one is justified. And Plantinga, like many of the other externalists of the late 1970s and 1980s in epistemology, thought that many animals and small children—even ordinary adults—had perfectly good beliefs that met norms or standards understood in terms of forming and sustaining true beliefs and avoiding error, even though they could not justify their beliefs in the sense that Audi requires for "justification." But Plantinga's choice of a word—though it might facilitate understanding or at least ward against misunderstanding—does not matter. What matters is that what Plantinga called "warrant" falls under our broad, but still ordinary, sense of the term "justified."

Where Plantinga eventually grounded functions in God's design of our belief-forming capacities (despite the ecumenical advertising), for Tyler Burge (2003; 2020) it is *a priori* necessary that beliefs have the representational function of being true, and belief-forming capacities have the representational function of producing true beliefs. Whenever there are functions, he continued, it is *a priori* that there are three norms, standards or levels of adequacy in fulfilling functions. The first is function fulfillment: true belief. The second is to function or operate normally. The third is to fulfill the function reliably. The fourth is the combination of the second and third, to reliably contribute to true belief through normal functioning (Burge 2003, 2010). Most beliefs that meet the fourth norm are knowledge, but not all are. Like Plantinga, Burge called a belief *warranted* when the capacity that formed the belief met this fourth norm. But for the same reason just given, Burge might have instead called it "justification," for it falls under our broad use of the term. *Indeed*, Burge sometimes even glosses "warrant" as "justification in the broad sense" (Burge 2020: 52).

A good number of other epistemologists are now working in this tradition, seeking to ground norms that apply to beliefs in terms of functions (Bergmann 2004; Graham 2012; 2018; Simion 2019). If functions ground (a plurality of) norms, functions can ground norms or standards governing belief. Meeting these norms then counts in favor of calling the belief *justified*.

What about knowledge and justification, on this looser sense of the term? As for the Littlejohn-Williamson kind of line, knowledge nearly trivially entails justification, even on the looser view.

When it comes to animals and small children, the reliabilist, the ontological internalist, the strict externalist, and the proper functionalist may agree that while

animals and small children might know a great deal, their knowledge still entails justification in the looser sense, even if their knowledge does not entail justification in the access sense. Though divorcing knowledge from justification is easy once we take a broadly reliabilist approach to knowledge and we place an ability to justify as a requirement on justified belief, it's not as easy once we rely on a less demanding sense of justification in our philosophical explication of epistemic justification.

Clairvoyance, chicken-sexers, idiot savants and miracle lawn-mower repair men are difficult cases that still require more discussion than they have received in the literature. An ontological internalist might still require conscious grounds for justification. A process reliabilist might still require psychologically real processes (Lyons 2019). A proper functionalist might still require substantive functions. If knowledge really is present in these cases, then even on the looser conception knowledge would not require justification. But that might just one lead to reassess whether knowledge is present in these cases.

What about blindsight or superblindsight? Burge would claim, for blindsight and super-blindsight, that if the capacity is a genuine competence, they would both contribute to justification. Plantinga could allow for God to instill a new lawnmower repair capacity with true belief as a function. Burge might allow for that too. But they would both reject knowledge despite defeated justification. For them, that would be going too far.

Why is the question whether knowledge entails justification interesting? Besides the obvious answer, there is a subtler one. Some philosophers have held that internalists are right about justification, but externalists are right about knowledge. Audi's view might be put this way. But if "justification" has the second sense as well as the first, externalism might be right about both knowledge and justification, or at least knowledge and justification in the second sense.²

ENDNOTES

- 1. Warrant for Plantinga comes in degrees; some warranted true beliefs fall short of knowledge; and some warranted beliefs even fall short of truth. Though he often glossed warrant as that property that converts true belief into knowledge, that was the slogan and not the official position.
- 2. I am very grateful to years of support and encouragement from Robert Audi. I am grateful to the anonymous referee, the editor, and Robert Audi for comments that led to several improvements. This paper was supported by a research award from the Humboldt Foundation, a fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust, and funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant agreement No 948356, 'KnowledgeLab: Knowledge-First Social Epistemology' project, PI Mona Simion.

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