

How to combine evidentialism with knowledge-first epistemology

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1. Introduction¹

Evidence plays an important role in our epistemic life. Believing what our evidence indicates seems to be the epistemically responsible thing to do. Evidentialists make this idea the central claim of their theory, by explaining the notion of epistemic justification in terms of evidence. One way to formulate Evidentialism is in terms of the following Supervenience claim:

Supervenience Evidentialism: one's epistemic justification supervenes on one's evidence.

Supervenience Evidentialism remains silent on lots of issues: e.g., what evidence is, how exactly evidence and epistemic justification are related to each other, or how justification and evidence relate to knowledge. Depending on how we fill in the details, we'll have varieties of evidentialism.

The main aim of this paper is to develop evidentialism against the background of an epistemological framework that's received a lot of attention over the past twenty years: knowledge-first epistemology. The resulting view is what I call "Evidential Knowledge-first". To do so, first, I consider the traditional way of developing evidentialism and argue that, while it vindicates the roles we expect evidence to play, it faces what I call the *individuation challenge* for non-inferential justification. I then consider another way of

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developing evidentialism, what I call “Technically Evidentialism”: this is what we get when we jointly take two core claims of the knowledge-first epistemological approach, e.g., $E=K$ and $J=K$. I argue that, although it avoids the individuation problem that Traditional Evidentialism faces, this view is very far from the original spirit of evidentialism. This is how we get to Evidential Knowledge-first. Evidential knowledge first is an example of how we should combine evidentialism and knowledge-first epistemology in a way that is in line with the spirit of Traditional Evidentialism, while avoiding its problems.² Rather than being a theory of justification, Evidential Knowledge first is presented as a novel two-tiered account of knowledge. As we will see, one of the core features of my view is that it entails that cases of non-inferential knowledge are cases of knowledge without justification. I will show why this is a benefit of the view, rather than a bug.

2. Traditional Evidentialism

Supervenience Evidentialism is silent on what evidence is, what it takes for someone to possess evidence, and for someone’s evidence to support a proposition. Traditionally, Supervenience Evidentialism has been associated with Internalism about evidence. Conee and Feldman (Conee & Feldman, 1985) (2004), for instance, who could be considered the fathers of the evidentialist project, explicitly sign up to an internalist view of evidence which they call *mentalism*. On this view, evidence is “internal” to the subject, insofar as it supervenes on one’s non-factive mental states, e.g., beliefs and impressions. Furthermore, note that Supervenience Evidentialism is traditionally thought of as a claim about *propositional* justification (as opposed to *doxastic* justification), namely, an evaluation of a *proposition* given the subject’s evidence (as opposed to an evaluation of a subject’s *belief* given a subject’s evidence). But evidentialists who want to explain justification in terms of evidence will also try to explain *doxastic* justification in terms of evidence. After all, it’s plausible to say that an important reason why epistemologists have been interested in the notion of propositional justification is that it plays a crucial role in explaining what it means for someone’s *belief* to be justified. Traditionally, evidentialists have cashed out the details of doxastic justification in the light of propositional justification:

² The core tenets and motivation behind Evidential Knowledge First can be found in chapter 4 (in particular pp. 137-148) of my PhD Thesis *Evidential Externalism* (see Edinburgh University Thesis Repository, (Fratantonio, 2018): <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/33204>). There, I refer to my view as “Ecumenical Evidentialism”. Since 2018, some attempts to bring together (in various ways) evidentialism and knowledge first epistemology have appeared, e.g., Dutant’s “knowledge-first evidentialism” (forthcoming). I briefly discuss Dutant’s version in section 6 of this paper. After writing this paper I became aware of discussion of a view similar to mine in Bird (2024). Ultimately, Bird does not endorse the view.

Evidentialist Doxastic Justification: one's belief that p is justified only if one's belief that p is based on one's evidence supporting p (i.e., one's propositional justification for p).

Evidentialist Doxastic Justification is an attractive view, for it's in line with the role we expect evidence to play. First, evidence is what should guide and regulate our believing. Evidence is what we should follow to come to justify beliefs. A popular way to motivate this idea is along instrumentalist lines: truth matters and believing on the basis of one's supporting evidence seems to be the best way to get to the truth. Second, the basing requirement underpinning the evidentialist notion of doxastic justification accounts for the fact that not only we should believe what our evidence supports, but we should believe it for *good* reasons. The fact that our evidence supports a proposition is the good reason why we should believe such proposition. As Conee and Feldman put it when talking about the importance of a well-founded (i.e., doxastically justified) belief:

“The notion of a well-founded belief [...] serves [...] to accommodate the intuition that there is something epistemically defective about drawing justified conclusions for bad reasons. Such beliefs are ill-founded, in virtue of not being based on justifying evidence” (Conee and Feldman 2004: 103)

Third, as Kelly puts it, “it is characteristic of rational thinkers to respect their evidence” (2008). And this is so even when we're in suboptimal situations, e.g., when our evidence is misleading. Falsely believing that p on the basis of one's supporting evidence is surely much better (epistemically) than falsely believing that p on the basis of wishful thinking. Traditional Evidentialism can explain why this is the case.

3. The Individuation challenge for traditional evidentialism

Evidentialism is a theory of justification. However, it's plausible to say that the reason why epistemologists care about epistemic justification is because they care about knowledge. After all, knowledge entails justification. Evidentialists are no exception. With this in mind, consider again Evidentialist Doxastic Justification:

Evidentialist Doxastic Justification: S's belief that p is justified at t only if S bases her belief that p on one's evidence supporting p.

Now take p to be a contingent proposition about the external world. In this section, I consider a new challenge for evidentialism:

Individuation Challenge for Evidentialism: Given a subject S, if S knows that p, then we should identify an instance of evidence e that works as the evidential basis for S's belief that p, and that differs from p itself.

In this section, I argue that Traditional Evidentialism struggles to meet the challenge in cases of non-inferential knowledge, e.g., perception: it's hard to successfully identify an instance of evidence that sufficiently supports *p* and that is different from *p* itself.

The Individuation challenge rests on the plausible idea that, in order for one's belief that *p* to count as justified, one's evidential basis for one's belief that *p* should be different from *p* itself (remember *p* is a contingent proposition about the external world!). Call this the Independent Basis Requirement (IBR). Believing that *p* on the basis of *p* itself is just not adequate for one's *belief* that *p* to count as justified, and this is so even if *p* sufficiently supports *p* in a way that makes *p* *propositionally* justified.³ For even if it does, *believing* that *p* on the basis of *p* itself runs into a whole cluster of problems that epistemologists have tried running away from, e.g., problems of circularity and bootstrapping.⁴

One can try to reject IBR by appealing to self-verifying thoughts, e.g., the thought that I am now thinking that *p*. Such thought would seem to be justified by its very content. There are a few things one could say here. One option is to insist that, insofar as we are taking seriously the spirit of evidentialism about *doxastic* justification, we should just deny that these self-verifying thoughts are justified in the sense expressed by evidentialism. Another option is to be concessive and grant that there is a special class of Cartesian propositions that can be justified by itself. However, this is compatible with the fact that *most* of the contingent propositions about the external world that we come to believe evidentially are such that those beliefs are not doxastically justified merely by their content.

Note that endorsing IBR doesn't require committing to a specific view of the ontology of evidence. If evidence is propositional, then IBR means that believing that *p* on the basis of (the proposition) *p* is not adequate for doxastic justification. However, the same thing can be said even if we endorse a non-propositionalist account of evidence. For instance, one could say that a belief that *p* based on one's *belief that p* itself is not enough to make the belief that *p* justified.⁵

With this in mind, consider the following paradigmatic case of non-inferential knowledge:

Perception

³ While *p* makes *p* propositionally justified on a probabilistic and normic account of evidential support, there are good reasons to think *p* doesn't support *p* on an explanationist account of evidential support. Cf (Fratantonio & Lasonen-Aarnio, Refuting two dilemmas for infallibilism, 2022)

⁴ In a similar vein, Pritchard takes seriously a similar problem when he discusses the "basis problem" for his epistemological disjunctivism (2012).

⁵ Even phenomenal conservativists who argue that the mere believing that *p* offers *some* support to the belief that *p*, they nevertheless would agree that believing that *p* doesn't offer *sufficiently* good evidential support to make believing that *p* *ultima facie* justified (McCain, 2020).

Laura sees that there is a table in front of her. She believes that there is a table in front of her. In fact, there's a table in front of her. In this case, Laura in fact knows that there's a table.

To meet the Individuation Challenge, the evidentialist has to successfully answer the following question: what's the evidential basis for Laura's belief that there is a table? More precisely:

What's the evidence e such that: Laura believes that there's a table on the basis of e at t, and e is different from the proposition that there is a table?

The details of the answer to this question will depend – amongst other things – on what one thinks evidence is: propositions or experiences (with propositional content). But as we will see, these details won't matter here. No matter what one thinks evidence is, the evidentialist will run into problems.

The only reasonable thing to say here is that Laura's evidence consists of the proposition that *it seems to her as if there's a table*, or her experiential state constituted by her *seeming as if there is a table*. In fact, this is in line with what evidentialists have said.⁶ Let's assume that Laura's seeming of a table, or the propositional content of such seeming, can offer adequate evidential support to the proposition that there is a table.⁷ Here's another question that the evidentialist needs to answer:

How does Laura possess such evidence?

We can group accounts of evidence-possession into doxastic and non-doxastic ones. According to the doxastic account, one possesses evidence e in virtue of standing in a doxastic relation towards the propositional evidence e or, if one endorses an experientialist view of evidence, towards the propositional content e of the experience. This doxastic relation can be that of knowledge (Williamson T. , 2000), justified belief (Beddor, 2015), true belief (Mitova, 2014), or belief (Conee and Feldman 2004: 232). On the alternative non-doxastic view, one possesses evidence e in virtue of being in a non-doxastic relation towards one's evidence, e.g., *by being* in a seeming state (McCain & Moretti, 2021).

⁶ Conee and Feldman (2004; 2008) endorse experientialism. According to McCain and Moretti (2021), one's evidence is experiential, but experiences have propositional content. For defences of propositionalism see (Williamson 2000: ch 9) and (Kvanvig, 2018).

⁷ Although see (White, 2006) and (Lasonen-Aarnio & Hawthorne, forthcoming) for objections.

Unfortunately, no matter which party one sides with, there will be problems. If the doxastic account of evidence-possession is correct, then Laura will have to at least *believe* that it seems to her as if there's a table (or some other related proposition about her experience of a table).⁸ Crucially, this over-intellectualises perceptual knowledge. The evidentialist claim on which perceptual knowledge requires belief based on supporting evidence (doxastic justification), together with the doxastic account of evidence possession delivers a view on which perceptual knowledge requires having beliefs about one's phenomenology.

If, instead, the non-doxastic account of evidence-possession is correct, then the evidentialist can say that Laura has the proposition "it seems that there is a table" (or the appearance of the table itself) as part of her evidence merely in virtue of *being* in the seeming-state. On this non-doxastic view, it's in virtue of the distinct phenomenology that comes with *being* in a seeming-state as if there is a table and that makes it feel "as if we could tell that [there is a table]" that Laura has the evidence she has. This is what is sometimes called the "forcefulness" of the experience. It's worth considering this option in detail given that traditional evidentialists have tended to endorse a view along these lines. By rejecting the doxastic account, the evidentialist can avoid the over-intellectualisation problem. However, they do so at the cost of facing another equally serious problem, which I call the problem of flimsy knowledge:

Flimsy Knowledge

At t_1 Laura sees and thereby knows that there is a table before her. At t_2 , Laura leaves the room while retaining her belief that there's a table next door.

In *flimsy knowledge*, as soon as Laura leaves the room she stops being in a perceptual seeming-state with a distinct phenomenal force. But if the non-doxastic view of evidence possession is correct, then, as soon as she leaves the room, Laura loses her original evidence and thereby her knowledge that there is a table. But surely we can't lose evidence (and knowledge) that easily! Or can we? Perhaps the evidentialist could insist that there's nothing problematic in saying that Laura loses *perceptual* knowledge. After all, there are various ways in which Laura can regain her knowledge just as easily. Let's see how.

Imagine that, after she's left the room, someone tells her that there's a table next door. Laura could now re-base her belief that there is a table on the newly acquired testimonial evidence. On this line of response, Laura has lost perceptual knowledge as soon as she left the room, but she has very easily gained new evidence. I personally find the idea that one could so

⁸ Although Conee and Feldman ultimately endorse a non-doxastic account, they take this option seriously: "S has p as available evidence at t iff S is currently thinking of p" (2004: 232).

easily lose perceptual knowledge odd. It seems that the reasonable thing to say in these cases is that she Laura has both perceptual and testimonial knowledge. If this wasn't the case, then it would be false to say that Laura knows that there is a table by perception and by testimony. But there seems nothing wrong in saying that! But it might be that intuitions on this case boils down to how we decide to identify cases of perception. So let's grant that the non-doxastic view of evidence-possession gives us the right verdict: Laura loses perceptual knowledge as soon as she leaves the room. The evidentialist still has to explain the implausibility of saying that Laura's belief that there is a table in the next room wouldn't count as justified and thus knowledge *until someone tells her so!*

Here is where the evidentialist might want to appeal to Laura's memory. By retaining her belief when leaving the room, Laura has memory-based justification that there is a table in the next room. But in virtue of what does Laura's memory-based belief count as justified? I can see two options here. Either the justificatory basis of the memory-belief at time t2 is inherited from the justificatory basis of Laura's original perceptual belief at t1; or, just as in the case of testimony, we have a basis-shift: Laura's belief at t2 is justified in virtue of a new evidential basis at t2.

The first option is in line with a very popular view in the epistemology of memory, namely, preservationism. Roughly put, this is the idea that if one is justified in believing that p at time t1, and retains that same belief at a later time t2, then memory preserves the justification that the belief enjoyed at t1. But in virtue of what can memory preserve such justificatory basis? For remember we are considering a view on which one's justification depends on the evidence one bases one's belief on, and one has such evidence in virtue of *being in a seeming state with a specific phenomenal force*. But that seeming state with a specific phenomenal force that accompanies Laura's perception of a table at time t1 is completely gone at time t2!

The second option involves a basis-shift. Could Laura's memory-based belief be justified in virtue of the *different* seeming state that remembering comes with? Consider again the perceptual case. That *it seems that there is a table* is part of Laura's evidence in virtue of the fact that, in seeing that there is a table, it appears to her that there is a table. What kind of new seeming state is Laura in when she remembers that there is a table? In remembering that there was a table in the next room, *it appears to her that it appeared to her that there was a table in the next room*. It's in virtue of being in this memory-seeming state that Laura's at time t2 that *it seems to her that it seemed to her that there was a table* is part of her evidence. So we seem to have found a solution to our problems:

- i) Laura's belief that p at time t1 is based on the perceptual evidence *that it seems to her that p* (call it e_p), which she has in virtue of being in that appearance with distinctive phenomenal force (call it s_p).

- ii) When Laura leaves the room at t_2 , she loses s_p and therefore e_p ; however, she can base her belief that p at t_2 on the evidence that *it seems to her that it seemed to her that there is a table in the next room* (e_m) which she has in virtue of being in a corresponding appearance with a distinctive phenomenal force (s_m).

Here's a new worry that arises: regardless of which account of evidential support one endorses, s_m doesn't seem to be strong enough to justify p . Even the phenomenal conservatist will be forced to say that *my seeming that things seemed a certain way* offers at most prima facie justification to believe that things *seemed* a certain way.

Could the evidentialist say that it's this evidence e_m together with background beliefs that justify Laura's belief at time t_2 , e.g., her meta-memory belief that usually she remembers stuff correctly? The answer is "no". For remember that the problem is to explain how Laura retains her non-inferential justification and knowledge that there is a table in the other room – *without* thinking about it.

Let me consider a final option available to the evidentialist: appealing to the notion of *dispositional* appearances. This is in fact what McCain and Moretti do in order to account for the problem of stored beliefs (2021: 118-19). The idea is that, just as we have occurrent as well as dispositional beliefs, we have occurrent as well as *dispositional appearances*. As McCain and Moretti write:

"S might have an occurrent appearance that p , and then store that appearance in memory such that she is able to later have a mnemonic appearance that p . Plausibly, when S is in this position (where she can have a mnemonic appearance that p), it makes sense to say that she has a dispositional appearance that p ." (119)⁹

Let's go back to our original question: in virtue of what Laura retains her non-inferential justification and knowledge that there is a table once she leaves the room at time t_2 ? The evidentialist could reply by saying that Laura's justification at time t_2 comes from Laura's *dispositional appearance* that there was a table. Unfortunately, I believe this response is also ultimately unsuccessful.

First, there are reasons to be suspicious of the idea that one can have dispositional appearances just in the same way in which one can have a dispositional beliefs. For note that beliefs are not constitutively phenomenological, but phenomenal experiences – namely appearances with a phenomenology – obviously are. Now, one could think that we can

⁹ Note that McCain and Moretti consider a case of intellectual dispositional appearance. Even if what they say works for intellectual seemings, things seem more complicated when it comes to perceptual appearances.

nevertheless have dispositional appearance because we can have an appearance *without phenomenology*. This possibility seems to be close to what McCain and Moretti have called “mere seeming” (2021: ch 3). I think there are two problems here. First, it’s not clear how one can possess a *mere seeming* (namely an appearance without sensation or phenomenology) as part of their evidence if it’s in virtue of the *phenomenal force* of an appearance that one has that appearance as part of their evidence. Second, even if we grant that mere seeming can be part of one’s evidence and that can perhaps qualify as the target dispositional appearances, it’s not clear how such dispositional appearance can justify a belief. For McCain and Moretti themselves offer good reasons to think that *mere seemings* can at most offer an infinitesimal amount of justification.

Let’s take stock. If Traditional Evidentialism is correct, it faces the Individuation Challenge: it should be possible to identify an instance of evidence *e* that offers justification to *p*, that is different from *p* itself, and that is *S*’s basis for believing that *p*. While doing so in cases of inferential knowledge is easy, identifying such evidence in cases of non-inferential knowledge, e.g., perception, is very hard. The only candidate for such evidence is one’s *appearance* that *p*. But when we ask how one possesses such evidence we run into problems. If possessing *e* requires believing that *e*, then we run into an over-intellectualisation problem. If, on the other hand, one can possess *e* in virtue of being in a seeming state with a phenomenal force, then we run into the problem of flimsy knowledge: we lose knowledge very easily as soon as with are not presented with such phenomenology anymore. I have considered some ways in which the evidentialist can try to explain how one can regain such evidence, but I have argued that all of these options come with serious problems.

4. Technically Evidentialism

The traditional way of developing Supervenience Evidentialism seems to run into problems. But there are other ways to be an evidentialist in the sense expressed by Supervenience Evidentialism, and that are worth considering. Consider Knowledge-first Epistemology. While epistemologists have traditionally been concerned with the analytic program of defining knowledge in terms of more basic components, Knowledge-first epistemology rejects this approach. Knowledge is the unanalysable most general factive mental state. It’s that in virtue of which we can explain other epistemic notions. Knowledge is what sets the standards for what counts as evidence: all and only the propositions one knows qualify as evidence ($E=K$). Knowledge is also the norm of belief, action, and assertion. Given justification is a matter of meeting the norm of belief, on this knowledge-first view, one’s

belief that p is justified if and only if one knows that p ($J=K$).¹⁰ One doesn't need to sign up to all the commitments of the knowledge-first epistemology project. Here I am concerned with what happens when we take a knowledge-first approach to evidence and justification: by endorsing both $E=K$ and $J=K$, this view also classifies as evidentialist: one's justification supervenes on one's evidence.

Being evidentialist in this way comes with some benefits. All this view says about doxastic justification is that it's a property a belief has when it's knowledge ($J=K$). It also says that evidence *is* knowledge ($E=K$). However, it says nothing about the relation between one's knowledge that p and how one uses one's evidence to get to the belief that p in the first place. On this view, however you get to be in the state of knowledge, once your belief *is* knowledge, it counts as doxastically justified. Doxastic justification doesn't explicitly require you to base your belief on any independent evidence for believing p (although this is of course compatible with the idea that, in most cases, that's how we gain knowledge!). This way of being an evidentialist thus overcomes the Individuation Problem that Traditional Evidentialism faces. Williamson (2000: ch 1), for instance, would say that, given knowledge is the most general factive mental state, Laura knows that there's a table in front of her in virtue of being in a more specific factive mental state: in virtue of *seeing that* there is a table. *Seeing that* is a way of knowing that. No instance of evidence that is different from the proposition that there is a table needs to be identified.

There are, however, some cons about being evidentialist in this way. I have called this view "*Technically Evidentialism*" because, although it technically qualifies as evidentialist insofar as it entails Supervenience Evidentialism, it's very far from the spirit underpinning the evidentialist project as originally put forward by Conee and Feldman, and further developed by others, e.g., McCain (2014) and McCain and Moretti (2021). On this view, evidence doesn't have an essential role in *how we get* to knowledge, and doxastic justification *just is* knowledge. Evidence thus ends up playing no essential role in *how we get* to justification. The more acute manifestation of this consequence is the fact that $J=K$ doesn't allow for justified false belief. By reducing justification to knowledge, Technically Evidentialism doesn't capture the central role evidence plays in justification.

5. Evidential Knowledge-first

We've finally arrived to Evidential Knowledge-first. Evidential Knowledge-first develops traditional evidentialism against the background of knowledge-first epistemology. It does

¹⁰ Williamson (2000) represents the most programmatic contemporary defence of Knowledge-first Epistemology. For defences $J=K$ see (Williamson, forthcoming) and (Sutton, 2007) For a critical assessment of Knowledge-first Epistemology see (McGlynn, 2014).

so in a way that overcomes the problems faced by Traditional Evidentialism, while remaining in line with its spirit.

Evidential Knowledge-first is not merely a theory of justification. Rather, Evidential Knowledge-first offers a two-tiered account of *knowledge*. This view is evidentialist because it understands inferential cases of knowledge in terms of evidentialist justification: inferential knowledge requires belief based on supporting evidence. At the same time, it implements evidentialism with knowledge-first epistemology in two important ways. It takes cases of non-inferential knowledge to be cases of knowledge that are not based on evidence. In line with the knowledge-first approach, cases of non-inferential knowledge are cases in which one knows something by being in a specific factive mental state. At the same time, it endorses E=K. This has the implication that, while non-inferential knowledge is not itself based on evidence, it will work as evidence for all other inferentially formed beliefs. However, in what follows, I will show that this two-tiered account of knowledge maintains what's good about traditional and technically evidentialism, while avoiding their problems. While I won't be able to develop to fully defend the view here, at least for these reasons, it's worth taking this view seriously.

On the one hand, Evidential Knowledge-first avoids the individuation problem for Evidentialism. After all, non-inferential knowledge does not require any belief based on evidence. Instead, non-inferential knowledge is knowledge one gains by being in a specific factive mental state, e.g., seeing *that*. At the same time, by retaining the traditional evidentialist account of doxastic justification, it vindicates the original spirit of the evidentialist project: evidence plays an essential role in how beliefs get to be justified, in a way that allows for justified false beliefs.

However, there's an important way in which my view differs from both Traditional and Technically Evidentialism. Consider again *Perception*. Despite offering different explanations, both evidentialists and knowledge-firsters will take Laura's belief to be justified and a case of knowledge. But note that, by endorsing the evidentialist view on which doxastic justification requires belief based on supporting evidence, together with the view on which non-inferential knowledge does *not* involve a belief based on supporting evidence, Evidential Knowledge-first entails that non-inferential cases of knowledge are cases of knowledge *without justification*. This is a benefit of my view, rather than a bug. In the remainder of the paper I show that by allowing for knowledge without justification, Evidential Knowledge-first provides us with a non-traditional form of foundationalism. This, in turn, will be the key to overcome a circularity problem that, according to Beddor (2015), *every* evidentialist theory – no matter how traditional or revisionary – will face.

6. (Non-inferential) Knowledge without justification

So far we've considered Supervenience Evidentialism: one's justification supervenes on one's evidence. And yet, as Beddor points out, it's plausible to say that, in developing a theory of doxastic justification, the evidentialist wants to *explain* justification in terms of facts about evidence (Beddor 2015). To do so, the evidentialist will also have to endorse what Beddor has called Grounding Evidentialism:

Grounding Evidentialism: Necessarily, all facts about one's justification (henceforth, J-facts) are wholly grounded in facts about one's evidence (henceforth, E-facts).

Crucially, according to Beddor, by endorsing Grounding Evidentialism, a challenge arises. To put it in Beddor's words, every evidentialist theory needs to successfully answer the following question:

“Evidential Grounding Question (EGQ): What grounds the E-facts? When a person has *e* as evidence, what are the underlying facts that make this the case?”
(Beddor 2015: 1852)

According to Beddor, the evidentialist will have *successfully* answered this question only if the answer meets the following three desiderata:

- i) The answer accommodates our intuitions about evidence and its roles.
- ii) The answer should be of the form “whenever *S* has *p* as part of her evidence, this fact is grounded in *G*, where *G* offers a partial or complete explanation of the fact that *S* has *p* as part of her evidence”
- iii) The answer should be general, non-disjunctive and high-level. (Beddor 2015: 1852-1854)

Beddor argues that no evidentialist theory can successfully answer EGQ. The reason is that, according to Beddor, the following Further Epistemic Grounding is the only and most plausible way for the evidentialist to answer EGQ:

Further Epistemic Grounding: Whenever *S* has some proposition *p* as evidence, this fact is wholly grounded in the fact that *S* stands in some further epistemic relation *R* to *p*. Perhaps the relation is one of knowing. Perhaps the relation is something weaker, such as justifiably believing. But at the very least, in order for *S* to stand in *R* to *p*, *S* must be justified in believing *p*. (Beddor 2015: 1856)

The reason why he thinks so stems from considerations around the first desideratum i). Beddor's starting point is something evidentialists will hardly reject, namely, the fact that evidence is expected to justify the formation of further beliefs (2015: 1855). But according to Beddor, to play this justificatory role, S has to stand in a relevant epistemic relation R towards the target propositional evidence p. Either this relation is knowledge, and thus such that S has a justified belief that p. Or R is weaker than knowledge, but then the least R can be is justification. For this is the only way in which the target proposition p can justify other propositions and thus can be evidence. Therefore, Beddor argues, if a proposition p is part of S's evidence, then, S has a justified belief that p. As Beddor says: "After all, if (i) S unjustifiably believes p, (ii) p entails q, (iii) S infers q from p, we wouldn't typically regard S's resulting belief in q as justified" (2015: 1855). According to Beddor, meeting the first desideratum thus means accommodating the thesis that if S does not have a justified belief that p, then p cannot be part of S's evidence. And yet one cannot accommodate this idea unless one gives up on Grounding Evidentialism, for one would be forced to say that facts about evidence are eventually grounded in facts about justification.

As we've seen above, many evidentialists would reject the idea that you need to stand in a doxastic relation towards e in order for e to be part of your evidence. Beddor also considers this possibility. The evidentialist could say various things here: that E-facts are fully grounded in mental states; or that E-facts about p are fully grounded in the fact that it seems to one that p. But he thinks that none of these answers would work for they would conflict with either the first and/or the second desiderata (1861).

Let's grant that what Beddor says is correct and that Traditional Evidentialism cannot successfully answer EGQ. Can "Technically Evidentialism" avoid this problem? Technically Evidentialism would indeed avoid the problem, but only because, in the spirit of the anti-reductionist knowledge-first project, they would just reject Grounding Evidentialism in the first place.

Evidential Knowledge first, however, has the resources to avoid Beddor's problem, while still endorsing the explanatory project in line with the spirit of evidentialism. Evidential Knowledge First can satisfyingly answer the Evidential Grounding Question as follows: facts about justification are grounded in facts about evidence, and facts about evidence are eventually wholly grounded in facts about knowledge. Evidential Knowledge-first can offer the following Foundational Epistemic Grounding as answer:

Foundational Epistemic Grounding: Whenever S has some proposition p as evidence, this fact is wholly grounded in the fact that S stands in some further epistemic relation R to p. Either the relation is one of non-inferentially knowing

p. Or the relation is one of inferentially knowing p, in which case this relation is grounded in a more fundamental epistemic relation R' towards another proposition q, namely, one of non-inferentially knowing q. In any case, the fact that S has a proposition p as evidence is ultimately grounded in a fundamental epistemic relation R', namely, that of non-inferentially knowing.

By including an epistemic relation R' in the grounding relation, Foundational Epistemic Grounding meets the first desideratum. Furthermore, by embracing E=K, Evidential Knowledge-first aligns with our intuitions about the roles of evidence, as the input that allows us to gain more (inferential) knowledge or justified beliefs. By specifying that facts about non-inferential knowledge provide an explanation of facts about justification, it meets the second desideratum, while providing a high-level and non-disjunctive answer, thereby meeting the third desideratum.

Before concluding, let me briefly consider another way in which one could combine evidentialism with knowledge-first epistemology. Following (Dutant, forthcoming), one could endorse a view on which one's belief is justified when it's based on one's supporting evidence, where this is constituted of all propositions one knows. One might point out that Knowledge-first Evidentialism is a more straightforward and less revisionary way to combine evidentialism with knowledge-first epistemology. So why not go for that view? First, note that Dutant's "Knowledge-first evidentialism" is offered as an account of rationality, while Evidential Knowledge-first is offered as a novel account of *knowledge*. Second, note that Knowledge-first Evidentialism will not be enough to avoid the individuation problem and the circularity challenge, *unless* we also reject the idea that knowledge entails justification. Evidential Knowledge-first has the conceptual tools to do that. Investigating the relation between evidentialism and knowledge-first epistemology shows that the way to combine these views successfully requires rethinking the relationship between evidence, knowledge, and justification altogether.

7. Conclusion

According to Supervenience Evidentialism, one's justification supervenes on one's evidence. Supervenience Evidentialism remains silent on many issues crucial to any theory of justification: the nature of evidence, evidential support, evidence-possession. For this reason, we can think of evidentialism as a schema that can be developed in different ways.

I have considered two ways in which one can endorse Supervenience Evidentialism: Traditional Evidentialism and Technically Evidentialism. The former is so called because it

corresponds to the way in which evidentialists traditionally developed Supervenience Evidentialism. Traditional Evidentialism captures the role we take evidence to play, e.g., in acquiring inferential justification, but it faces an Individuation Challenge when it comes to non-inferential justification. Technically Evidentialism is so called because, although it's what we get when we endorse some core claims of the knowledge-first epistemology project, i.e., $E=K$ and $J=K$, it's remains far away from the spirit that has motivated evidentialists. The main aim of this paper was to present a novel evidentialist theory: Evidential Knowledge-first. This view combined some core commitments of knowledge-first epistemology with evidentialism, and it does so in a way that vindicates the spirit of traditional evidentialism.

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