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Jason Baehr

Loyola Marymount University, jbaehr@lmu.edu

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EVIDENTIALISM, VICE, AND VIRTUE

Jason Baehr

Loyola Marymount University

jbaehr@lmu.edu

According to evidentialism, epistemic justification is a function of the evidence one has in support of one's beliefs. More precisely, evidentialists subscribe to the following general principle:

- (E) A person *S* is justified in believing a proposition *p* at time *t* if and only if *S*'s evidence at *t* supports *p*.¹

“Evidence” should be construed broadly here such that it includes (or might include) supporting beliefs, experiential and introspective states, and rational insights. It is less clear how exactly to understand the relevant support relation. But according to one intuitive and fairly standard account, one's evidence supports a proposition just in case it makes this proposition more probable than not.² As this suggests, the kind of support in question – as well as epistemic justification itself – is a matter of degree.³

Evidentialism has been subjected to a barrage of criticisms in recent years, many of which have been aimed at showing that the satisfaction of (E) is not *necessary* for justification.⁴ My concern here is with the *sufficiency* of (E). I begin by discussing several cases in which a belief apparently satisfies (E) but fails to instantiate one or more varieties of epistemic justification that presumably are of interest to evidentialists. I go on to argue, however, that this problem does not warrant abandoning the thrust of evidentialism. Instead it calls for

supplementing (E) with a constraint according to which (under certain conditions) justification requires intellectually virtuous agency. The discussion thus reveals an important link between the recent enterprise of virtue epistemology and a more traditional, evidentialist account of knowledge.

Before getting started, a methodological point is in order. There are at least two notably different ways of understanding what might be involved with showing that the satisfaction of (E) is not sufficient for epistemic justification. The first is predicated on the idea that there exists a single determinate and univocal concept of epistemic justification and that disputes about the nature of justification are disputes about this concept. Here, arguing against the sufficiency of (E) involves arguing that a belief can satisfy (E) but fail to instantiate the concept in question. There are, however, serious problems with the idea that there exists a single determinate and univocal concept of justification. Indeed, as William Alston has argued, much of the debate in epistemology in recent years suggests that there are several such concepts or several “epistemic desiderata.”⁵ But if there are a variety of different concepts of epistemic justification, what would it mean to argue that the satisfaction of (E) is not sufficient for justification?

We can see an answer to this question by noting that while there may be a rather wide and diverse variety of epistemic desiderata, it is plausible to think that evidentialists are interested in a certain limited subset of them, and indeed, perhaps just in a single desideratum. This is, at any rate, what I shall be assuming here. Thus my concern shall be limited to what might be called “evidentialist-relevant” or “e-relevant” varieties of justification, which again are varieties the nature of which at least some evidentialist accounts of justification presumably are aimed at capturing.⁶ My immediate aim, then, is to show that a belief can satisfy (E) while failing to instantiate one or more e-relevant varieties of justification.

I. Problem Cases

A. Cases of defective inquiry

My argument for the claim just noted centers around two kinds of cases. In cases of the first sort, a belief satisfies (E) but only because the person in question either fails to inquire at all relative to this belief or else inquires in a manner that is clearly defective.

Case 1. George is the epitome of intellectual laziness, apathy, and obliviousness. He goes about his daily routine focusing only on the most immediate and practical concerns: feeding himself, getting to work on time, doing his job in a minimally satisfactory way, paying the bills, etc. He lacks any natural curiosity and is almost entirely tuned out to the news of the day. Unsurprisingly, George has many beliefs he should not and fails to believe many things he should. In the former category is George's belief that exposure to secondhand smoke poses no significant health risks. Given his extremely narrow and practical focus, George is entirely oblivious to all of the well-publicized research indicating the dangers of secondhand smoke. In fact, George's belief that no such link exists is positively supported by his evidence. He remembers, for instance, having heard from a reliable source some years ago that scientists had failed to establish any correlation between exposure to environmental smoke and various health problems. And as far as he knows, the research on this topic has not changed; nor does he have any reason to think that it might have changed. Finally, George's own parents smoked a great deal in his and his siblings' presence, and neither he nor they have had any major health problems.

Case 2. Gerry holds the same belief as George and on roughly the same grounds.

Therefore he too has positive reasons for believing that secondhand smoke is not a health

hazard. Unlike George, however, Gerry is not oblivious to the news of the day; in fact he is reasonably inquiring and likes to check things for himself. The problem is that his inquiries tend to be insufficiently demanding and discriminating. He is prone to gullibility, carelessness, and hasty generalization. Upon hearing the news reports affirming the danger of secondhand smoke, Gerry decides to look further into the matter. The first item he comes across happens to be a report published by an organization with major financial ties to the tobacco industry. The report is aimed, not at a fair and balanced treatment of the issue, but rather at exposing any apparent weakness or grounds for doubt in the recently publicized research. To any reasonably intellectually demanding and discriminating inquirer, the dubious nature of the report would be evident. But to Gerry it is not. And the result is that Gerry's total evidence (which includes his initial evidence for thinking that secondhand smoke is benign) supports his belief.⁷

In each of the above cases, the person's belief is well-supported by his accompanying evidence; thus the beliefs in question seem clearly to satisfy (E). The problem is that the *reason* these beliefs are well-supported traces back to certain *defects* on the part of the individuals who hold them. George has good evidence for his belief only on account of his intellectual "tunnel vision." And Gerry's belief remains well-supported because of his undemanding and indiscriminating method of inquiry. In light of these shortcomings, the beliefs of George and Gerry seem clearly to be unjustified. And it is plausible to suppose that the variety of justification in question is an e-relevant one.⁸

In response to cases of this general sort, Richard Feldman (2004, 2005) offers a defense of the sufficiency of (E) the upshot of which is that there is no e-relevant sense of justification according to which the beliefs of George and Gerry are unjustified. According to Feldman, an

evidentialist theory of justification is concerned strictly with the relation between a person's evidence and her belief. It makes no difference whether this evidence is the result of (say) uncritical or hasty inquiry or whether the person has the evidence only on account of failing to inquire at all. While these factors may bear on the evaluation of the believer's intellectual character or doxastic methods, Feldman claims, they have no bearing on the justificatory status of beliefs that result from such character or methods.⁹

Perhaps there is some epistemic value simply in having a belief that fits one's evidence – regardless of whether this evidence is the result of defective inquiry. Such beliefs might be said to involve a kind of logical coherence or consistency, which indeed is often regarded as an epistemic desideratum.¹⁰ Moreover, as Feldman reasonably queries, what *other* doxastic attitude could plausibly be required of agents like George or Gerry?¹¹ Clearly it would be problematic, given their evidence, to suggest that either of them ought to believe that secondhand smoke *is* harmful – or even, for that matter, to suspend judgment on the issue. Thus there does appear to be a sense of justification according to which the beliefs of George and Gerry are justified. And there is little reason not to regard this as an e-relevant species of justification.

But this hardly puts (E) in the clear. For the fact that the beliefs of George and Gerry instantiate *some* e-relevant variety of justification guarantees neither (a) that there is not an additional variety of e-relevant justification that these beliefs fail to instantiate, nor (b) that the variety of justification they do instantiate is particularly worthy or significant. Both of these possibilities merit further consideration.

First consider (a). Despite whatever justification the beliefs of George and Gerry may enjoy, there is indeed an additional intuitive and e-relevant sense in which these beliefs are unjustified. For while the beliefs are well-supported in the relevant sense, the support or evidence

clearly is not what it should be. George, for instance, *ought* to have taken notice of some of the widely publicized research establishing a link between exposure to secondhand smoke and various diseases. Similarly, it *ought* to have occurred to Gerry to undertake a broader inquiry and to pay closer attention to the authorship of the relevant report. He too should be aware of the evidence against his belief. Since the beliefs of George and Gerry are based on evidence they clearly ought not to possess, there is a straightforward sense in which they ought not believe as they do; that is, there is a straightforward sense in which their beliefs are *unjustified*. And again, the kind of justification in question seems clearly to be e-relevant.

One way of drawing further attention to this variety of justification is to consider how we might evaluate certain *actions* of George or Gerry that are based on the beliefs in question. Suppose, for instance, that on the basis of his belief that secondhand smoke is benign, George proceeds regularly to smoke in the company of his children. Clearly we would condemn George's behavior, despite the fact that from his own perspective he is doing no harm. And the reason is that he ought not to have this perspective in the first place; he ought not *believe* as he does. For again, evidence against this belief is abundant and readily available to him. He ought to be aware of this evidence and to believe in accordance with it. This strongly suggests that his present belief is, in a genuine and e-relevant sense, unjustified.¹²

Now consider (b). While the beliefs of George and Gerry may instantiate a certain epistemic desideratum, the significance or worth of this desideratum is questionable. To see why, note that the evidence bases possessed by George and Gerry are in a certain substantial way *defective* or *contaminated* – and for reasons that trace back to these individuals' *own* epistemic wrongdoing. Again, had either George or Gerry been even minimally attentive and discriminating in his thinking about the relevant subject matter, his perspective regarding the

truth of the claim in question would have been very different and considerably more accurate. Things being what they are, however, why think that George or Gerry does particularly well from an epistemic standpoint to believe on the basis of his evidence? What is especially epistemically good or worthy about believing in accordance with a defective or contaminated evidence base, particularly when the defects in question are attributable to one's own cognitive failure? It would seem not much. My suggestion is not that George and Gerry ought to believe, *against* their evidence, that environmental smoke *is* harmful. But this is to say very little favor of the former alternative. It is entirely consistent with this alternative's having only a very minimal significance or value.

Cases like that of George and Gerry are analogous to what moral philosophers sometimes call "tragic dilemmas," which are situations in which a person is forced to choose between "sin and sin" or between "the lesser of two evils."¹³ Consider the case of Bertie, who having squandered the semester partying with his friends and playing video games, is presently faced with the dilemma of cheating on one of his final exams (his only hope for passing a course that he needs to graduate on time) or devastating his parents (who have sacrificed a great deal to pay for Bertie's education and have planned a major family reunion in honor of Bertie's graduation). On at least one plausible analysis of the situation (assuming, say, that these really are Bertie's only options and that his family would be sufficiently devastated as a result of his failure to graduate), Bertie ought to cheat on the exam. Indeed we might say that, given the circumstances, this is the only real or justifiable option. At the same time, however, this is not to say anything very positive about Bertie's action. While it may be the "lesser of two evils," it is an "evil" nonetheless. Similarly, while George and Gerry in some sense do well to believe in accordance with the evidence they have (e.g. in doing so they avoid believing or withholding belief on no

basis whatsoever), this is not to say anything too positive about them or their beliefs, for again, each one believes in accordance with a defective evidence base, the very defects of which are a result of his own cognitive wrongdoing. The point, then, is that while the beliefs of George and Gerry may instantiate a certain e-relevant concept of justification, this variety of justification is not a very significant epistemic desideratum. Their beliefs are, as it were, the lesser of two epistemic evils in the situation. We may conclude that a belief can satisfy (E) while failing to instantiate any *significant* e-relevant concept of justification.¹⁴

B. Cases of defective “doxastic handling” of evidence

In the cases just discussed, the epistemic status of a belief is undermined on account of some *prior* mistake or defect on the part of the believer, and specifically, on account of whether or how the believer inquired at some point in the *past* relative to the belief in question. In a second set of cases indicating the insufficiency of (E), the epistemic status of a belief is affected by an *occurrent* mistake or defect on the part of the agent. Specifically, it is affected by the agent’s “doxastic handling” of information that threatens to defeat or undermine her justification, that is, by the way in which she treats or regards this information at the time of belief. In the first case, the agent ignores or suppresses the potential defeater; in the second case she distorts or misrepresents it.

Case 3. Like George and Gerry above, Daphne believes that exposure to secondhand smoke poses no serious health risks; she also has some positive evidence in support of this belief. However, she is neither intellectually lazy nor indiscriminating. Upon hearing about the relevant research, she does some looking into the matter and nearly all the information she comes across indicates that in fact environmental smoke *is* hazardous. Daphne’s problem is that she is a hypochondriac raised by two chain-smoking parents.

Therefore, owing to extreme anxiety about her own health, she cannot bring herself to accept any of the relevant evidence; indeed she quickly and conveniently (though genuinely) “forgets” about or suppresses it. Thus, as far as Daphne is aware, her evidence continues to support her belief.¹⁵

Case 4. Doris also believes with some positive evidence that secondhand smoke is benign. Upon hearing the news reports to the contrary, she too engages in reasonably careful and discriminating inquiry on the matter and in doing so encounters a host of data that threaten to refute her belief. Like Daphne, Doris is unable to accept this data. But in Doris’s case, this is due to her own extremely strong attachment to smoking. Her habit of smoking wherever and whenever she wants represents one of few pleasures in her otherwise lonely and unhappy existence. Unlike Doris, Daphne’s cognitive constitution is such that she cannot simply “forget” or suppress the relevant evidence. Instead she *distorts* or *misrepresents* certain critical aspects of it. The result is that from her standpoint, the case for thinking that environmental smoke is hazardous is a weak one and her original belief remains well-supported.¹⁶

There can be little doubt that there is an e-relevant sense in which the beliefs of Daphne and Doris are unjustified. Daphne is suppressing evidence of which she has recently been made aware that casts major doubt on her belief. Doris, though not exactly suppressing or ignoring such evidence, is distorting or misrepresenting key elements of it. Nevertheless, the beliefs of Daphne and Doris are well-supported from their respective points of view.

Evidentialists are unlikely to deny that the beliefs of Daphne and Doris are unjustified. They may, however, attempt to argue that these beliefs fail to satisfy (E) and hence do not present a problem for their position. Specifically, they might argue that what matters for

justification from an evidentialist standpoint is not whether it *seems* to a person that her belief is well-supported by her evidence, but rather whether her belief really *is* well-supported. This objection draws attention to a certain ambiguity surrounding (E). It indicates the need to distinguish between the following two more precise formulations of the central evidentialist principle:

(E2) *S* is justified in believing *p* at *t* if and only if *S*'s evidence at *t* *appears to S* to support *p*.

(E3) *S* is justified in believing *p* at *t* if and only if *S*'s evidence at *t* *in fact* supports *p*.

The suggestion, then, is that an evidentialist might respond to the cases of Daphne and Doris by claiming that evidentialism should be understood along the lines of (E3) rather than (E2), and that once it is, these cases cease to pose a problem for evidentialism.

(E3) does apparently provide the evidentialist with a way around the Daphne and Doris cases.¹⁷ For both Daphne and Doris presumably are in possession of evidence that in fact tells decisively against their beliefs.¹⁸ The problem, in Daphne's case, is that she is ignoring or suppressing this evidence; Doris, on the other hand, is distorting or misrepresenting it. But given that the evidence in question is in their possession, and that it *actually* tells against their beliefs, (E3) rules (plausibly) that these beliefs are unjustified.

But (E3) is problematic on other grounds. Consider cases of belief that involve what might be referred to as "deeply hidden" evidential relations, which are relations that obtain between a person's evidence base and one of her beliefs, but that are extremely difficult to discern, even from the standpoint of an entirely normal and well-functioning cognitive agent. Presumably such relations exist.¹⁹ If so, (E3) entails that if a person's evidence base seems, by all appearances, to support a certain claim *p*, but on the basis of a "deeply hidden" entailment

relation in fact supports a different claim q , this person is justified in believing q . But this is extremely implausible, for the person in question is entirely unaware of the fact that her evidence actually supports q .²⁰

To see how an evidentialist might try to amend (E3) in light of this problem, note that most evidentialists also embrace *internalism* about epistemic justification. According to one standard version of internalism,²¹ a person is justified in believing a given claim only if he has “direct and unproblematic access” to any factors that justify this belief. If supplemented with an internalist condition, (E3) becomes:

(E4) S is justified in believing p at t if and only if S 's evidence at t *in fact* supports p and S has direct and unproblematic access to this fact at t .

(E4) allows the evidentialist to deal with one problematic aspect of the case just noted, since it entails (plausibly) that the person in question is not justified in believing q (the proposition supported by the hidden evidential relation).²² But a serious problem remains. For not only is it *implausible* to think that this person is justified in believing q , it is extremely *plausible* to think that she is *justified* in believing p (the proposition supported by “all appearances”).²³ But if (E4) is correct, this person is not justified in believing p , for her evidence *in fact* supports q .²⁴

One way around this difficulty would be to narrow the scope of the internalist element of (E4) such that justification is a function of the actual relation between a person's belief and *those aspects of the person's evidence to which she has direct and unproblematic access*. This would yield the following principle:

(E5) S is justified in believing p at t if and only if *the aspects of S 's evidence to which S has direct and unproblematic access at t in fact support p* .²⁵

(E5) can handle both aspects of the case under consideration. It rules (plausibly) that the person in question is not justified in believing q because, while q is supported by the totality of this person's evidence, it is not supported by that part of her evidence to which she has direct and unproblematic access (i.e. the "unhidden" part). It also rules (plausibly) that the person *is* justified in believing p , for the part of this person's evidence to which she has direct and unproblematic access does in fact support p .

But while (E5) is an improvement over (E4) in one respect, it is vulnerable in a way that (E4) is not. For unlike (E4), (E5) generates the wrong result in connection with the very cases that led us to distinguish between various formulations of evidentialism in the first place: viz. the Daphne and Doris cases. The details of these cases can easily be refined such that Daphne and Doris lack the kind of access required by (E5) to the relevant counterevidence, with the implausible result that their beliefs satisfy (E5) and thus are justified. We might imagine, for instance, that Doris is so attached to smoking at will that if she were to curtail her habit in any way (which she would feel compelled to do if she were honest with herself about the relevant evidence), her psyche would begin to unravel. Thus it would take some rather extreme measures (e.g. hypnosis or therapy) to get her to confront this evidence honestly. On this rendering of the case, Doris presumably lacks anything like "direct and unproblematic" access to that part of her evidence that she is distorting or misrepresenting. Therefore, since the evidence to which Doris does have the required kind of access in fact supports her belief, (E5) rules (implausibly) that her belief is justified.²⁶

There is in fact a notable irony in such cases that further tells against the plausibility of (E5). It consists in the fact that the more defective the individuals in question are, the more likely they are to be justified according to (E5). For instance, the more Daphne suppresses or ignores

the relevant counterevidence, the more problematic and less direct her access to this evidence will become, and thus the more likely it is that her belief will be justified according to (E5). This is problematic, of course, because it is precisely this self-deception that intuitively undermines the justification of Daphne's belief in the first place.

We began this section by considering how two additional cases pose a problem for the sufficiency of (E). This led to a distinction between (E2) and (E3). According to the former, justification requires mere "apparent support" between one's belief and one's evidence, while according to the latter, it requires "actual support." Problems with (E3) led to a consideration of two related principles, (E4) and (E5), both of which we also found susceptible to serious objections. My concern in the remainder of the paper is with (E2). I argue that (E2) can be modified in a way that preserves the thrust of evidentialism and avoids the problems that plague these other formulations.

II. Modifying Evidentialism

We have examined two sets of cases in which a belief satisfies (E2) but fails to instantiate any interesting variety of e-relevant justification. Thus (E2) clearly stands in need of modification. To see what form this modification should take, it will be helpful to look again at the various cognitive defects manifested in the cases in question. Doing so will provide an indication of what further, positive requirement should be added to (E2).

The defects in question include the following: intellectual laziness, inattentiveness, lack of intellectual discrimination, gullibility, carelessness, disregard for the truth, ignoring and distorting counterevidence, self-deception, and more. One striking feature of this list is that it consists entirely of intellectual *vices*, that is, of bad or defective traits of intellectual character. It is on account of an exercise of such traits that the individuals in Cases 1-4 above lack

justification for their beliefs. One strategy for amending (E2), then, would be to make the *antidote* to intellectual vice a *necessary* condition for justification.²⁷ This antidote is of course intellectual *virtue*. Intellectual virtues include excellences of intellectual character like carefulness and thoroughness in inquiry, inquisitiveness, attentiveness, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual honesty, and intellectual integrity. Thus it might be thought that (E2) should be supplemented with an additional condition that makes an exercise of intellectual virtue a necessary condition for justification. This would yield something like the following principle:

(E6) *S* is justified in believing *p* at *t* if and only if *S*'s evidence at *t* appears to *S* to support *p* and *S* exercises virtues of intellectual character in the formation of this belief.

There is, however, at least one immediate and formidable problem with (E6).²⁸ The problem is posed by cases of “brute” or “passive” justification, which are cases in which justification results primarily from the mere brute or default functioning of the subject’s cognitive equipment.²⁹ Suppose, for example, that while working late one night in my well-lit study, the electricity suddenly and unexpectedly shuts off, immediately causing the room to go dark. In response, I automatically and without thinking form a belief to the effect that the room has grown dark. Intuitively, my belief is justified. It is also justified according to (E2), since my belief is (and appears to me to be) well-supported by my visual experience. However, it is *not* justified according to (E6), for there is little reason to think that I have exercised any virtues of intellectual character in the formation of this belief. Again, this belief, together with my evidence for it, is the product (more or less) of sheer “cognitive mechanics,” that is, of the natural or rudimentary functioning of my cognitive apparatus. Virtuous agency is not involved in any

significant way.³⁰ This shows that an exercise of intellectual virtue cannot be a necessary condition for justification.

We have found, then, that a belief can be unjustified on account of the believer's exhibiting vicious agency, but that it is implausible to make virtuous agency a necessary condition for justification. If so, how can (E2) be modified – beyond the addition of a purely negative and unilluminating amendment to the effect that justification requires an *absence* of vicious agency – such that it precludes the relevant manifestations of intellectual vice? The apparent solution is to modify (E2) such that it requires something like an exercise of intellectual virtue, but *only* in cases like the ones discussed earlier (*not* in cases of passive or brute justification). This can be done by supplementing (E2) with a certain *proviso* or *constraint*.

To get an idea of what exactly this constraint should look like, we must examine more closely the difference between Cases 1-4 above, on the one hand, and cases of brute or passive justification, on the other. The principal difference between the two concerns the role of personal agency in the formation of the relevant belief. In the former set of cases, the agency of the believer is involved; in the latter kind of case, it is not. Recall, for example, the case of Gerry. His agency bears immediately on the content of his evidence: his evidence is what it is largely because he has *inquired* in an indiscriminating and careless way. He then forms his belief on the basis of this evidence. Personal agency is also involved in the formation of the beliefs of Daphne and Doris. Here it bears most immediately, not on the content of the agent's evidence, but rather on how the agent handles or regards this evidence. Doris, for instance, *distorts* or *misrepresents* critical elements of her evidence. She then forms her belief on the basis of the resulting evidential perspective.³¹

Thus, in Cases 1-4, personal agency makes a salient contribution to what we might call the “evidential situation” of the subject in question, meaning that it largely determines either the *content* of the subject’s evidence or how this subject *handles* or *regards* this evidence.³² By contrast, in cases of brute or passive justification, the believer’s agency does not contribute to his or her evidential situation. In the case of passive justification discussed above, for instance, I acquire and confront the relevant evidence concerning the lighting in my study simply as a result of brute or natural cognitive functioning. My evidential situation does not implicate or involve my agency in any significant way.

We are now in a position to see how (E2) should be amended. The following is a “constrained” version of (E2):

(CEJ) *S* is justified in believing *p* at *t* if and only if *S*’s evidence at *t* *appears to S* to support *p*, *provided that* if *S*’s agency makes a salient contribution to *S*’s evidential situation with respect to *p*, *S* functions (qua agent) in a manner consistent with intellectual virtue.

Several elements of (CEJ) merit explanation or discussion. First, note that the virtue requirement in (CEJ) does not have universal application: it applies only to cases in which a person’s evidential situation involves or implicates her agency in the relevant sense. Thus (CEJ) is not proposing an additional necessary or defining condition for knowledge. Rather it is laying down a constraint regarding when or under what conditions a belief’s being supported by good evidence generates justification. Second, the “qua agent” qualification in the final clause of (CEJ) serves to underscore the fact that while an agent’s brute cognitive machinery might be in good working order, and thus that the agent might be “functioning” well or virtuously at one level, (CEJ) requires virtuous *agency*. Third, (CEJ) does not require that a believer actually *be*

intellectually virtuous. It does not require, for instance, that the virtuous conduct in question flow from a fixed or settled disposition on the part of the believer (as it would with one who is genuinely virtuous).³³ Fourth, (CEJ) does not demand that a believer manifest the *height* of intellectual virtue or that her intellectual conduct be *maximally* intellectually virtuous. It requires merely that she function in a manner *consistent* with intellectual virtue, that is, that she refrain from functioning in a way that a virtuous person characteristically would *not*.³⁴

Two general observations concerning (CEJ) are also in order. First, (CEJ) generates the correct result in connection with Cases 1-4 above. None of the subjects in these cases turn out to be justified according to (CEJ), for in each case, while the person's agency does make a salient contribution to his or her evidential situation, the person fails to function in a manner consistent with intellectual virtue. Moreover, (CEJ) can explain why, in cases of brute or passive justification, a person can be justified absent any virtuous activity. For again, these are cases in which the subject's agency does not bear on his or her evidential situation. Second, a commitment to (CEJ) does not require the repudiation of internalism, at least on standard ways of understanding this doctrine. Internalism requires that a believer have direct and unproblematic access to the factors that *justify* her belief. But while it is doubtful that we always have access to whether we have, say, inquired in an intellectually virtuous way, (CEJ) does not thereby require the repudiation of internalism, for (as noted above) it does not maintain that virtuous functioning or activity is itself a defining feature of justification or a "justifying factor." Again, the notion of virtue is intended to play a mere background or constraining role.

III. BonJour's Evidentialism

Before concluding, it is worth examining how something like (CEJ) has in fact been gestured at – even if not elaborated on – in some of the evidentialist literature. Laurence BonJour

is one of the most prominent defenders of an evidentialist-type account of epistemic justification. According to BonJour, justification depends on the possession of good epistemic reasons, or reasons for thinking that one's belief is true. For present purposes, this may be read as the claim that justification depends on the possession of good *evidence*.³⁵

In an early work (1985), BonJour draws an explicit and apparently rather strong connection between the notion of good epistemic reasons and that of epistemic *responsibility*. He says that epistemic responsibility is the "core notion" of epistemic justification conceived in terms of such reasons.³⁶ In more recent work, however, BonJour describes the relation between justification and epistemic responsibility in weaker terms. He maintains that while justification and responsible epistemic conduct often go hand-in-hand, they do not always do so, and thus that justification should not be *defined* or *analyzed* in terms of epistemic responsibility or related concepts.³⁷ Nevertheless, in a recent work on a priori justification (1998), BonJour suggests that the concepts of epistemic responsibility or intellectual virtue might yet have some role to play in connection with an analysis of justification.

According to BonJour's initial proposal regarding the nature of a priori justification, a person is a priori justified in believing a given claim just in case he has "rational insight" into the necessity of this claim.³⁸ Without getting into the details of this account, it should be noted, first, that rational insight as BonJour understands it is a source of good epistemic reasons: it is capable of providing believers with cogent grounds in support of the truth of certain necessary propositions. Thus BonJour's position on a priori justification conforms to his broader position on justification noted above and can reasonably be regarded as evidentialist in nature. Second, while the above represents BonJour's initial formulation of his view, he goes on in a discussion regarding the fallibility of a priori justification to claim that, strictly speaking, a priori

justification requires mere *apparent* rational insight; it does not require that beliefs justified a priori be true. This qualification enables BonJour to account for a variety of putative cases of a priori justification in which the belief in question turned out to be false.³⁹

As this brief sketch suggests, BonJour seems clearly to favor a version of evidentialism along the lines of (E2) rather than (E3) above: that is, a version according to which justification is a function of whether, from the believer's standpoint, her belief is well-supported by her grounds. BonJour is aware, however, that a quasi-subjective account of justification like this one is open to certain objections to which a more objective account along the lines of (E3) is not. One such objection is what he refers to as the argument from "dogmatism and bias."⁴⁰ Roughly, the worry here is that an account of justification that requires mere *apparent* support between a person's evidence and her beliefs will (implausibly) sanction beliefs that enjoy such support only on account bias or dogmatism on the part of the believer (i.e., cases in which, were the person in question not thinking in a biased or dogmatic way, her belief would not appear to her to be supported by her evidence). Such cases bear a clear resemblance to some of the cases discussed earlier, for instance, to the cases of Daphne and Doris. Again, these are cases in which a belief appears to be well-supported but only because the person in question is suppressing or distorting a potential defeater.

In response to this objection (and elsewhere⁴¹), BonJour makes the critical point that on his view, only rational insights that have been arrived at on the basis of "reasonably careful reflection" have any epistemic significance.⁴² Such reflection, he maintains, is inconsistent with dogmatism and bias; elsewhere he indicates that it is inconsistent with other intellectual vices like carelessness, inattention, and intellectual sloppiness.⁴³ Thus, on BonJour's view, if a given claim appears to be well-supported by one's evidence, but this appearance is a product of vicious

or irresponsible cognitive activity, then one is not justified in believing this claim. Bonjour characterizes the relevant requirement as a “background condition” on a priori justification.⁴⁴

This condition bears a close similarity to the constraint incorporated into (CEJ). For it requires believers to avoid intellectually vicious or irresponsible cognitive conduct and to engage in virtuous or responsible conduct (i.e. in “careful reflection” on their beliefs).⁴⁵ Moreover, Bonjour apparently does not regard the virtuous or responsible activity in question as a *defining* element of a priori justification. On his view, the sole basis of such justification is the possession of good epistemic reasons acquired via pure thought or reason; and he makes clear that the relevant kind of cognitive activity does not itself enter into such reasons.⁴⁶ Rather, Bonjour’s view is apparently that to generate justification, the possession of such reasons must occur within a certain context or against a certain backdrop or “background,” viz., one in which the believer in question is functioning in an intellectually virtuous way. Thus for reasons that reflect some of the points discussed earlier, Bonjour apparently thinks that a suitable version of evidentialism will include a virtue-component.⁴⁷

There are, however, at least two notable ways in which the virtue-component included in (CEJ) may differ from the one that Bonjour has in mind. First, Bonjour’s constraint appears to be concerned merely with the “doxastic handling” of evidence, that is, with how an agent is *presently* treating or regarding her grounds for her belief.⁴⁸ It is not clear that he intends for the constraint to apply to the process of *inquiry* that generated these grounds. However, as the cases of the George and Gerry show, a belief can fail to be justified on account of its being the product of intellectually vicious inquiry – even if at present the agent handles or regards his evidence for this belief in a responsible or virtuous way.

Second, and more importantly, Bonjour does not indicate that his “background condition” is intended to apply only to a certain limited number of cases. Rather he appears to view it as applying to *any* instance of a priori justification.⁴⁹ We saw above, however, that such a requirement is too demanding. Again, in cases of brute or passive justification, a person can acquire and properly attend to good reasons or evidence in support of a given claim without exercising virtuous agency. This is because evidence is sometimes acquired and “handled” in a manner governed (more or less) by mere “cognitive mechanics,” or the brute functioning of one’s basic cognitive equipment.⁵⁰

IV. Conclusion

We have seen that a plausible evidentialist account of epistemic justification must be supplemented by a proviso or constraint which, when applicable, requires cognitive agents to function in a manner characteristic of intellectual virtue. We have also seen that such a constraint has been gestured at (though never fully developed) in some of the evidentialist literature. This discussion reveals a notable connection between evidentialist accounts of justification and the much more recent development of virtue epistemology. Virtue epistemologists give the concept of an intellectual virtue a central role in epistemological theorizing.⁵¹ According to some virtue epistemologists, an exercise of intellectual virtue is a defining feature of knowledge.⁵² The conclusion of the present paper does not go this far. We have, in fact, examined reasons for *denying* that virtuous motives and actions are a necessary or defining feature of knowledge or justification. Nonetheless, we have seen that an adequate evidentialist account of knowledge must at least make use of the concept of an intellectual virtue. On such an account, this concept will occupy an important background or constraining role. It is apparent, then, that evidentialists and virtue epistemologists are concerned with some common conceptual territory and that they

would benefit from being in conversation twith each other. Indeed it is plausible to suppose that further reflection on this shared territory would lead to additional interesting avenues of inquiry.⁵³

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¹ Though not all of them employ the term "evidentialism," defenders of the basic position indicated by (E) include Laurence Bonjour (1985), Roderick Chisholm (1989), Earl Conee and Richard Feldman (2004), and Richard Swinburne (2001).

² See, e.g., Swinburne 2001, Ch. 3.

³ While epistemic justification arguably is an essential feature of knowledge, (E) should not be read as capturing that which, in addition true belief, is necessary for knowledge. For knowledge may require a *degree* of evidential support not required by (E). Furthermore, the satisfaction of (E) does not rule out Gettier factors. Thus one can have a true belief that satisfies (E) but that falls short of knowledge.

⁴ See, e.g., Goldman 2001 and Plantinga 1993. In fact the objection is that the satisfaction of the condition *specified* in (E) is unnecessary for justification. For ease of discussion, however, I will speak of satisfying or failing to satisfy (E) itself. For a defense of evidentialism against some of these objections, see Conee and Feldman's *Evidentialism* (2004).

⁵ Alston 1993. According to Alston, different camps of epistemologists (e.g. internalists and externalists) appear to be concerned with fundamentally different concepts of justification. Alston compares the attempt to provide an analysis of justification understood as a single, univocal concept to a "quixotic tilting at windmills" (542).

⁶ I will not attempt to spell out the notion of e-relevant justification in any detail here. However, given the close association between evidentialism and *internalism* (an association discussed in more detail below), e-relevant varieties of justification are likely to be internalist in nature; and paradigmatically externalist varieties of justification are likely *not* to count as e-relevant.

⁷ For a similar kind of case, see Kornblith 1983. John Greco (2005) also raises a related worry for evidentialism.

⁸ This is evident in the fact that there is something *irresponsible* about the cognitive conduct – and the resulting beliefs – of both George and Gerry. For, as we shall see in more depth below, evidentialists (e.g. Bonjour 1985) sometimes draw a close connection between justification and cognitive responsibility.

⁹ See, e.g. Feldman 2005, p. 281; cf. Conee and Feldman 2004, p. 90, 101.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Swinburne's discussion of "synchronic justification" in 2001, Ch. 1. See also Feldman 2005, pp. 277-78.

¹¹ 2005, p. 282. See also Feldman and Conee 2004, Ch. 4.

¹² Nothing about this or the former assessment of these cases presupposes an objectionable doxastic voluntarism. While George and Gerry may lack direct control over their beliefs, they presumably have a sufficient amount of indirect control. For presumably they have control over the cognitive behavior (e.g. the inquiry or lack thereof) that produces these beliefs. Thus there is no problem with saying that the beliefs are unjustified or that George and Gerry ought not to have these beliefs.

¹³ See, e.g., Hursthouse 1998 and Geach 1977.

¹⁴ Though on largely different grounds, Greco (2005) also argues that internalism is mistaken “about any interesting or important sort of normative status” (260).

¹⁵ We may stipulate that she has no recollection of having encountered the counterevidence or having suppressed it. Thus from her standpoint, the totality of her evidence indeed supports her belief.

¹⁶ Again we can stipulate that Doris is unaware of having distorted or misrepresented the relevant data and thus as far as she can tell, her belief is supported by her evidence.

¹⁷ Note, however, that (E3) is still susceptible to the George and Gerry cases discussed earlier; for their beliefs, while intuitively unjustified, are in fact well-supported by their evidence.

¹⁸ On the assumption that the relevant evidence is *not* actually in their possession, matters are even worse for (E3). For in this case, the beliefs in question *are* well-supported by the relevant evidence and so turn out (implausibly) to be justified.

¹⁹ Swinburne (2001) offers an example along these lines of a detective in possession of a great deal of evidence regarding a certain murder. It follows from the detective’s evidence “by a complicated line of argument” that a certain suspect is guilty. However, “the detective is overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of evidence and so has not seen the relevance of this piece of evidence” (154). Conee and Feldman (2001, p. 73) discuss a similar sort of case; as does BonJour (1998, p. 128).

²⁰ Perhaps the belief is justified in a certain robustly *externalist* sense. But such justification presumably is not e-relevant; and it is e-relevant justification that we are concerned with here.

²¹ See, e.g., BonJour 1992. “Mentalism” is an alternative version of internalism according to which justifying factors are necessarily “internal” in the sense of being “internal to the person’s mental life” or “in the person’s mind” (Conee and Feldman 2004, p. 55). However, as I will note momentarily, an appeal to a mentalist version of internalism would be of no help in dealing with the case in question.

²² By contrast, if (E3) were supplemented with a *mentalist* internal condition, it would still entail that the person in question is justified in believing *q*, for the support relation between the person’s evidence and her belief that *q* presumably would be internal in the relevant sense. Thus an appeal to a mentalist version of internalism is of no help in the present context.

²³ Again, there may be a purely externalist standpoint from which the person is *not* justified in believing *p*; but this would not be an e-relevant standpoint and so need not concern us here.

²⁴ As this point suggests, “actual support” views like (E3) and (E4) face a special challenge when it comes to embracing *fallibilism* about epistemic justification. Few would deny the possibility of justified false belief. But to the extent that such fallibility includes cases in which a person’s grounds clearly *seem* to (but in fact do not) support her belief, actual support views apparently do not allow for fallibilism.

²⁵ “Aspects” should here be understood to include *either* items of evidence themselves (e.g. experiences, other beliefs, etc.) or any evidential *relations* between items of evidence and the believed proposition. Thus there is no need to stipulate further that *S* must have access to the fact that the aspects of *S*’s evidence to which *S* has access in fact support *p*, for as it stands (E5) can handle the sort of case that led to the adoption of an access clause in the first place. That is, given (E5), the person just discussed is not justified in believing *q*, for *q* is not supported by the aspects of her evidence to which she has direct and unproblematic access. Thus, the addition of this further clause is unmotivated.

²⁶ Clearly a similar story could be told about Daphne. It might, for instance, take the same sort of extreme measures to get Daphne to “recall” the evidence she is suppressing. If so, she too lacks the kind of access to this evidence that is required by (E5) and thus is justified in believing as she does.

²⁷ Another strategy would be to incorporate a purely *negative* condition according to which justification requires *not* exercising any vices of intellectual character. One problem with this condition is that it sheds no light on what, positively, is required for justification beyond the satisfaction of (E5). Moreover, as I will get to below, it may be possible for a belief to be justified from an e-relevant standpoint even though the person who holds the belief displays intellectual vices at the time the belief is formed.

²⁸ An additional worry might be that the introduction of the second clause would make the first clause obsolete. That is, it might be said that an intellectually virtuous person (characteristically) would accept a proposition only if this proposition were well-supported by his grounds. I will not attempt to resolve this issue here.

²⁹ For a further discussion of such cases and of the problems they present for a virtue-based analysis of justification or knowledge, see Baehr 2006.

³⁰ It does not follow that my agency is completely idle. However, as Linda Zagzebski (1999) has shown, any plausible virtue-based account of justification or knowledge must (in order to deal with Gettier cases and related issues) posit a rather tight connection between the concept of knowledge or justification, on the one hand, and the

concept of an intellectual virtue, on the other, such that a person's belief counts as justified only if an exercise of intellectual virtue (or something like it) plays a *salient* causal role or constitutes the *best explanation* for the formation of this belief. In the present case, even if my agency were not completely idle, it clearly would not be the best explanation for why I form the belief in question; again, the best and most salient explanation for the this belief is simply the proper (and brute) functioning of my visual faculty. It is also worth noting the possibility that my agency might in some sense work *against* the formation of my belief in this case. Being under an imminent writing deadline, I might try to *deny* what has just occurred (i.e. that the lights have gone out); I might, to a certain extent, be *incredulous*. Here I would be attempting to *resist* the truth and so would be displaying a kind of intellectual *vice*. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that I would be unable to resist the force of my own (brute) cognitive nature and would come to believe (and indeed to know – even from an evidentialist standpoint) that the lights have gone out. This shows how e-relevant justification is in fact consistent with certain forms of intellectually *vicious* agency.

³¹ A similar story could be told regarding the beliefs of George and Doris. George's agency is involved in the formation of his belief to the extent that it explains his intellectual laziness and obliviousness. And Daphne's is involved to the extent that it is the cause of her ignoring or suppressing the relevant counterevidence.

³² As indicated in nt. 30 above, it is important that personal agency make a *salient* (vs., say, a minimal or background) contribution to or that it *largely determine* the subject's evidential situation.

³³ Nor does it require certain other elements of genuine virtue: e.g. that the person in question take *pleasure* in her virtuous action. This feature of (CEJ) is important, since a version of evidentialism that required actual virtue possession would be unreasonably demanding.

³⁴ "Characteristically" is important here since even the most intellectually virtuous sometimes err.

³⁵ Some evidentialists (e.g. Conee and Feldman 2004) seem to equate the notions of good evidence and good epistemic reasons. Given a broad enough understanding evidence, this strikes me as a plausible identification.

³⁶ P. 8.

³⁷ See, e.g., BonJour and Sosa 2003, pp. 175-77. BonJour cites cases of "epistemic poverty" as one reason for not identifying justification and epistemic responsibility. For instance, if a person's epistemic resources relative to a given claim are (through not fault of his own) severely limited, the person might be epistemically responsible in accepting this claim even while lacking genuinely good evidence or reasons in support of it (and thus failing to be justified).

³⁸ Ch. 4. See esp. pp. 106-110.

³⁹ Ibid., 110-15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 133-37.

⁴¹ E.g., *ibid.*, pp. 110-15. BonJour also hints at a similar requirement for empirical justification in 1985, pp. 42.

⁴² 1998, p. 113. Moreover, according to BonJour, a priori justification also requires that the person in question grasp the *necessity* of the relevant proposition.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 112, 116.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 137.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 137. If it did, then the reasons and the resulting justification would no longer be purely a priori, since the activity in question is an *empirical* phenomenon.

⁴⁷ This could also be described as a "responsibility-component." However, the former is more accurate and illuminating since it is precisely the sort of conduct characteristic of intellectual virtue that is required for epistemic responsibility.

⁴⁸ This is suggested, for instance, by his various characterizations of the way in which dogmatism or bias (which the virtue-requirement is intended to rule out) might be involved with a belief. See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 112-14, 127, 136-37.

⁴⁹ This is suggested by the very notion of a *condition* on justification. However, it is important to keep in mind that that this is a *background* condition and hence that its satisfaction is not – even for BonJour – a defining element of justification.

⁵⁰ It might be said in response that brute justification is limited to *empirical* justification and that since BonJour's immediate concern is *a priori* justification, he is right to think of the satisfaction of his condition as *necessary*. But this is unconvincing. For presumably a subject can arrive at good a priori grounds in support of certain elementary necessary truths without exercising any virtues of intellectual character. Thinking in accordance with modus ponens or disjunctive syllogism, or judging that two plus one equals three, for instance, need not involve an exercise of virtuous agency. Even relatively brute cognitive functioning is sometimes capable of generating a priori justification.

⁵¹ See Baehr 2004 for an overview of the field.

⁵² Linda Zagzebski (1996), for instance, defines knowledge (roughly) as true belief produced by virtuous motives and actions.

⁵³ For instance, it would be worth considering from the other direction, as it were, just how close the connection is between the notion of believing with good evidence and intellectually virtuous belief formation. It is reasonable to think that intellectually virtuous people tend to form beliefs on the basis of good grounds or evidence. But is believing in the absence of such grounds ever intellectually virtuous? In the context of this inquiry, the virtue epistemologist is likely to benefit from discussions among evidentialists about, e.g., what counts as evidence in general and as good evidence in particular. This, then, is a further indication of opportunities for cross-fertilization between the two fields.