

## **All epistemic justification is inferential justification**

Suppose you believe that Sam, your next door neighbour, is at home. Why do you think Sam is at home? Because Sam's car is in their driveway (it wasn't earlier), the lights in the house are now on (they were off a short time ago), and you can hear recorded music playing in the house (you don't recall whether the music was on earlier, but you figure that almost always, when recorded music is playing, someone is nearby listening to it, or why would it be playing?).

You seem to have good reason for believing that Sam, your next door neighbour, is at home. Your good reason consists in these other beliefs you have. They can be organized into an argument that has the proposition "Sam, my next door neighbour, is at home."

Now, what about the other beliefs you have, the ones that support your belief that Sam is at home? Why do you have reason to think they are true? Well, that Sam's car is in the driveway is made evident by the fact that the car in the driveway looks like Sam's car and the general fact that, usually, for objects like cars, at least, how things look is how they are.

If all epistemic justification is inferential justification, then your good reason for believing that Sam's car is in the driveway will be another argument from other beliefs you have, and so, too, will be your good reason for thinking that for objects like cars, usually how things look is how they are. Your good reason for holding those other beliefs will likewise be arguments from other beliefs.

But if it is not true that all epistemic justification is inferential justification, then in the case of some beliefs you hold, your reason for thinking them true will not be an argument from other beliefs. It will be something else: an experience, or a sense datum, or a fact, or .... But it won't be an argument from other beliefs.

Could it be that not all epistemic justification is inferential justification? Could one have a reason to hold true some proposition though that reason is not an argument from other propositions one holds true?

Propositions justifiably held true when one's justification is not inferential let's call "basic beliefs." A basic belief, then, would be a belief that though itself is not justified by its relations to any other beliefs can serve in the inferential justification of some of those other beliefs.

What could the justificatory grounds of a basic belief be, then, since it isn't another belief?

Whatever it is, either it has or lacks propositional content.

Suppose it has propositional content. Then it travels in the same circles as beliefs and, so, might as well be a belief. If that which gives one a justifying reason for holding a basic belief is another belief, though, the basic belief is justified inferentially and, thus, is not a basic belief after all.

Suppose then that whatever justifies one in holding some basic belief doesn't itself have propositional content. How, then, could it serve as a justifying reason for one's holding that basic belief?

Perhaps the justifying ground causes or sustains the basic belief. Very well—but causal relations are not justificatory relations. (Reasons don't justify holding propositions true unless they cause one to hold true those propositions, but that is a necessary condition for justification, not sufficient.)

Thus: If that which justifies one's holding a basic belief has propositional content, the basic belief isn't actually basic, and if that which justifies one's holding a basic belief lacks propositional content, then it doesn't actually justify one's holding that belief.

Hence: No epistemic justification is non-inferential.

Therefore: All epistemic justification is inferential.