

## Propositional vs. Doxastic Justification: what comes first?

I explore the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification, and I argue that while the doxastic notion has conceptual priority over the propositional one, the propositional notion has theoretical priority over the doxastic one.

I begin by distinguishing *conceptual* priority (a notion F is conceptually prior over a notion G when a previous grasp of F is required to acquire a grasp of G), and *theoretical* priority (a notion F is theoretically prior over a notion G when the role played by G in philosophical theorizing is subordinate to the role played by F).

I continue by noting that doxastic justification entails propositional justification but not vice versa, and I present an argument according to which the best explanation for this fact is that we conceptualize doxastic justification as the conjunction of propositional justification and the basing relation. The argument concludes that since conjuncts have conceptual priority over the conjunction in which they appear, propositional justification has conceptual priority over doxastic justification (Fumerton 2006: 36).

I argue that the argument fails. A conjunct can only be said to be conceptually prior to the conjunction in which it appears if it can be specified without reference to the notion expressed by the conjunction itself (Williamson 2000: 3). And arguably this doesn't happen in the case at hand. Philosophers like Bergmann (2006: 4) and Turri (2010: 320) have suggested that a subject has propositional justification to believe a proposition when she's got reasons or evidence such that, were she to base her belief on those reasons or that evidence, she would be doxastically justified.

If so, a characterization of propositional justification relies on a previous grasp of the notion of doxastic justification. I provide support to such claim by considering some attempts to characterize the notion of propositional justification without appealing to the notion of doxastic justification, and showing that they fail.

After having argued that propositional justification cannot be grasped without a previous grasp of doxastic justification, I conclude the section by providing some initial reasons to believe that, on the other hand, doxastic justification can be grasped independently of propositional justification, and thus that it is conceptually prior.

I then move on to consider the issue of theoretical priority, and I suggest that, by contrast, propositional justification enjoys theoretical priority over doxastic justification. That is to say, a description of the beliefs that one is justified in holding has to rely, at least implicitly, on a description of the propositions that are supported by one's reasons or evidence (regardless of whether one goes on to form the relevant beliefs or not).

I bring support to such claim by considering the case of reliabilism (as discussed in Goldman 1979): a theory that, while initially intending to provide an account of doxastic justification only, has to appeal to an account of propositional justification in order to satisfactorily face an important objection.

I conclude by noting that, in general terms, the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification is one of intertwinement. On one hand, doxastic justification has conceptual priority; on the other, propositional justification has theoretical priority.

## Abstract References

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