



Arguing against Evidentialism

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Abstract: There exists a widely-shared and strong intuition in favor of satisfying the requirement of producing evidence in support of our beliefs. A person's belief P is appraised as either justified or unjustified, rational or irrational, acceptable or unacceptable depending on whether evidence is presented in support of P . By evidence, we refer to any information presented that is relevant to the truth or falsehood of P . Evidentialism is the theory that requires that for a belief P to be justified, one has to have evidence, good reasons or adequate grounds in support of it. This paper is a philosophical analysis of evidentialism as a theory of justification. The first part consists of presentation of historical origins of the theory as gleaned from the writings of well-known evidentialists, and it will be followed by articulation of its thesis. My main objective is to present arguments that show that: (1) evidentialism itself is self-referentially incoherent; (2) there are beliefs that can be held without violating epistemic duties even though these beliefs are not based upon adequate evidence; and (3) evidentialism has very limited applicability, and there are at least two aspects of human experience where we can hold beliefs that are not based on sufficient evidence without being epistemically irresponsible. If successful, these arguments would give us good reasons for rejecting evidentialism.

Key Words: evidentialism; evidence; basic and nonbasic beliefs; justification