
Evidentialism as an epistemic tool for Philosophical Justifications

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<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v24i2.3>

Abstract

In the 20th century, Richard Feldman's and Earl Conee's evidentialism attracted many interests as it is seen as an interesting theory of epistemic justification. Feldman and Conee explains evidentialism as a theory of justification which posits that every knowledge claim must be justified only by evidence. That is, for a proposition to be epistemically justified, there must be a fitting evidence that qualifies it to be justified. It is the quality of the believer's evidence that is prerequisite for any epistemic justification, and this evidence must internal to the person. Put differently, one's evidence for a belief must be available to the person and not just a hearsay or an unverified testimony. Over the years, many critiques have been developed by different philosophers against this view of justification. In the same manner, Feldman and Conee, together with some evidentialists have rebutted to these critiques with counter-argument, in order to prove that evidentialism is the most plausible theory of justification. Against this background, this work adopts a hermeneutic methodological approach to examine Feldman's and Conee's evidentialism as a theory of justification. By exposing, discussing, and examining their thoughts, it argues that evidentialism although being a plausible theory of justification, lays much emphasis on evidences available to the believers, leading them to a quagmire of skepticism. It therefore recommends that evidentialism could be modified to address its limitation if it adopts critical methods to examine individual evidences irrespective of the degree of evidences, in order to establish a more fitting evidence that would be unquestionable for epistemic justification.

Key Words: Evidentialism; Evidence; Justification; Doxastic attitude

INTRODUCTION

The concern on how a belief can be justified has been a major topic in epistemology as it is seen as the prerequisite for knowledge following Plato's definition of knowledge as a "justified true belief."¹ This has provoked the thoughts of different philosophers to propound different theories of justification which explains what makes a belief to be justified. Evidentialism, as one of these theories, dwells solely on evidence as the main content of justification. It holds that for a proposition to be epistemically justified, there must be a fitting evidence which makes it to be so. The theory became very popular in the 20th century with the works of Richard Feldman and Earl Conee. According to Feldman and Conee, "the epistemic justification of a belief is determined by the quality of the believer's evidence for the belief."² Put differently, one can only be justified in holding a belief when one has an evidence that fits one's belief. Thus, evidentialism employs evidence as the main content of justification. They explain evidentialism as the most plausible theory of justification. In fact, Conee sees it as the only theory of justification that is consistent with common sense.³ For many years, the question on whether evidentialism is the most plausible theory of justification has been a debate among different epistemologists. Therefore, in order to address this question, this paper explains evidentialism majorly from the views of Feldman and Conee, discussing major objections to the theory and the responses to these objections.

¹ Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. F.M Cornford (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 210b.

² Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies* 48, no.1 (July 1985): 15. 15-34.

³ Earl Conee, "Foundationalism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2022) accessed January 9, 2024, plato.stanford.edu/entries/foundationalism/

It also juxtaposes the theory with reliabilism, one of the major theories of justification that has gained recognition and admiration these recent years. The paper analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of evidentialism, making it possible to weigh its plausibility as a theory of justification.

Evidentialism As A Theory Of Justification

Generally, evidentialism is a theory of justification that makes justification turn entirely on evidence. According to Conee and Feldman, an evidence is “any consideration that tends to show that a given proposition is true.”⁴ It could be objective (if it exists independently of anyone’s beliefs or opinions) or subjective (if it is based on someone’s beliefs or opinions). For example, a memory of seeing a ball is an objective evidence while a hunch that there is a ball is subjective evidence. They argue that both objective and subjective evidence could be used to justify belief, though objective evidence is typically more reliable. Ezebuilo equally explains that evidence consists in “perception, introspection, memory and intuition.”⁵

Evidentialism is seen as an internalist theory of justification because it holds that the degree to which one’s belief is justified is entirely determined by internal factors concerning one’s beliefs and sensory states. That is, the evidence that is relevant to evaluating a belief must be available to the individual, and cannot be external to them. It accounts for the doxastic attitude possessed by one towards a particular proposition whether it is a belief, disbelief or a suspension of judgment. In either case, there must be an evidence that fits one’s doxastic attitude towards a proposition. Thus, evidentialism holds that the doxastic attitude that a person is

⁴ Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, “Evidentialism,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no.10 (1985): 319. 319-320.

⁵ Hyginus Ezebuilo, *Epistemology at a Glance* (Awka: IPROGRESSIVE Press, 2022), 42.

justified in having is the one that fits the person's evidence. Feldman and Conee represent it as:

EJ Doxastic attitude *D* toward proposition *p* is epistemically justified for *S* at *t* if and only if having *D* toward *p* fits the evidence *S* has at *t*.⁶

Here are three examples that illustrates evidentialism accounting for one's attitude. Firstly, when a person under normal condition sees a box to be blue, would believe that there is a blue box before him. The person's belief is epistemically justified because of the perceptual evidence of sight. Again, when a person sees a proposition that states that the human blood is green, his visual experience makes disbelief the fitting attitude. Also, when a person is told that all dogs are brown, but he has doubt through evidence that all dogs may not be brown. In this case, neither belief or disbelief is epistemically justified, so, suspension of judgment would be the fitting attitude for this case, and the person also is epistemically justified for his doxastic attitude.

According to Feldman and Conee, the evidence that should be entirely fitting to one's doxastic attitude. Put differently, there should be a strong evidence for one's doxastic attitude. To explain this better, Feldman and Conee employ the term "well-foundedness" (WF). According to them, well-foundedness is a second evidentialist notion used to characterize an attitude that is epistemically both well-supported and properly arrived at.⁷ The term is mostly used for doxastic propositions. Its application depends on two matters of evidence, namely: the evidence one has and the evidence used in forming the attitude. Feldman and Conee represents it as:

WF *S*'s doxastic attitude *D* at *t* toward proposition *p* is well-founded if and only if having *D* toward *p* is justified for *S* at *t*; and
S has *D* toward *p* on the basis of some body of evidence *e*, such that

⁶ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 15.

⁷ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 23.

- (a) *S* has *e* as evidence at *t*;
- (b) having *D* toward *p* fits *e*; and
- (c) there is no more inclusive body of evidence *e'* had by *S* at *t* such that having *D* toward *p* does not fit *e'*.⁸

Kornblith argues that having a mere evidence is not enough to show that a proposition is justified.⁹ He constructs an example which would be considered here in order to illustrate WF. He says, suppose Alfred is justified in believing *p*, and justified in believing if *p* then *q*. According to evidentialism, Alfred's belief in *q* seems to be justified since the belief does fit the evidence. However, Kornblith argues that Alfred's belief in *q* may not be justified if he has a belief in *modus ponens*¹⁰, and believes *q* because he likes the sound of the sentence expressing it rather on the basis of *modus ponens* argument.

Feldman and Conee argues that if Alfred has strong evidence for his belief in *q* such as the *modus ponens*, then he is justified for his belief. However, if his belief for *q* is because he likes the sound of the sentence expressing it, then there is some sense in which the state of belief is epistemically defective.¹¹ This implies that his attitude for this belief is not well-founded for the 'defectiveness' of the belief. Nevertheless, if Alfred has a strong evidence for his attitude, his attitude is well-founded.

Evidence as an Epistemic Obligation

⁸ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 24.

⁹ Hillary Kornblith, "Beyond Foundationalism and the Coherence Theory," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 601.

¹⁰ *Modus ponens* is the Latin word for "mode of affirming." It is a valid argument form in propositional logic which states that if *p* is true, then *q* is true. *P* is true, therefore, *q* is true. It is considered valid because it is impossible for the conclusion to be false if the premises are both true.

¹¹ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 25.

From the argument of evidentialism, it seems clear that for a proposition or belief is to be justified, there need to be an evidence that supports the claim. In line of this thought, Feldman and Conee see ‘evidence’ as an epistemic standard for evaluating doxastic conduct. They see evidence as a standard of conduct, and that it as an obligation for one to believe a proposition that has a fitting evidence. Feldman argues that all beliefs should be based on evidence and that there is no way to justify a belief.¹² Therefore, a person who sees a light on in an overwhelming perceptual experience, epistemically ought to believe that proposition. In the same manner, a person who has no evidence about a particular proposition epistemically ought not to believe that proposition. By implication, one has the epistemic obligation to believe or to believe a proposition depending on the fitting evidence, thus, to be epistemically obligatory is equivalent to be epistemically justified.¹³

Feldman and Conee consider two sorts of epistemic obligations from different philosophers which are incompatible with evidentialism. What seems to be epistemic obligatory for these views are not rooted in evidence, so Feldman and Conee evaluate these views in order to prove that evidentialism remains the most plausible theory of justification.

Justification and the obligation to believe truths

This view is majorly proposed by Roderick Chisholm. For Chisholm, one has an "intellectual requirement" to try one's best to bring it about that, of the propositions one considers, one believes all and only the truths.¹⁴ This implies that for a person to have a doxastic attitude towards propositions, the person has

¹² Richard Feldman, "Evidentialism," in *The Blackwell Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 100.

¹³ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 19.

¹⁴ Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 13.

to try his best to believe truths and refute falsehood. This poses a big problem because the phrase “trying one’s best” is ambiguous. How can one try one’s best? It is possible to believe a proposition which might turn out to be true but it does not mean that one is epistemically justified in believing that. Nonetheless, Feldman and Conee argue that it might be contended that trying one’s best to believe the truth and disbelieving falsehood really amounts to trying to believe and disbelieve in accordance to one’s evidence.¹⁵ However, Chisholm does not precisely state how a person can try his best to believe truths, and so, Feldman and Conee assert that the intellectual requirement that Chisholm identifies cannot be epistemically justifiable.¹⁶

Justification and Epistemically Responsible Action

This view of epistemic obligation comes from the view of Hillary Kornblith. According to Hillary Kornblith, “the justification of a belief depends on how responsibly one carried out the inquiry that led to the belief.”¹⁷ Here, what is considered as the object of epistemic obligation is ‘responsibility’ and so, Kornblith argues that one might have an evidence that fits his doxastic attitude to a proposition, yet his attitude to that proposition is unjustified because the attitude is from an epistemically irresponsible behaviour. He gives an example of a strong-head physicist who is unable to tolerate criticism. After presenting a paper, he refuses to listen to any objection even from his senior colleague which consequently, makes the objections to have no impact in his belief. Kornblith then argues that the physicist’s belief in his own theory is unjustified and that evidentialism cannot account for it.

¹⁵ Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” 20.

¹⁶ Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” 21.

¹⁷ Hillary Kornblith, *Justified Belief and Epistemically Responsible Actions* (New York: Blackwell, 2001), 43.

In response to this, Feldman and Conee explain that if the physicist knows that the objections are evidences against his own beliefs, then he is unjustified in holding that believe. On the other hand, if he remains ignorant of the objections including the one from his senior colleague, then believing the theory does remain justified for him (assuming that it was justified previously).¹⁸ They explain that even if the physicist has been an unpleasant fellow that lacks intellectual humility, his character has nothing to do with the epistemic status of his belief.

Objections to Evidentialism and Rebuttals

There are many theses in epistemology that have been published to refute evidentialism. These objections argue that justification is not entirely on evidence as evidentialism claims. For them, epistemic justification of a proposition does not depend entirely on evidence, there are some other factors that are to be considered also. Already, some objections have already been discussed in the above sections, however, the major objections would be discussed below which is accompanied by responses by Feldman and Conee.

Doxastic Voluntarism

According to Harry Frankfurt, doxastic voluntarism is the epistemic view that argues that people have voluntary control over their beliefs.¹⁹ He argues that people have the freedom to choose their beliefs, and that they are not limited by factors such as their experiences or the evidence they have. For example, one can choose to believe in God or not. Therefore, people are free to choose their beliefs based on what they want to be true. However, evidentialism holds that there are cases in which a person's evidence fits one's attitude, yet the person has no

¹⁸ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 21.

¹⁹ Harry G. Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 65.

control over the attitude. John Hell and Kornblith finds this position of evidentialism problematic. For Hell, the fact that we "speak of a person's beliefs as being warranted, justified, or rational ... makes it appear that ... believing something can, at least some-times, be under the voluntary control of the believer."²⁰ Hilary Kornblith claims that it seems "unfair" to evaluate beliefs if they "are not subject" to direct voluntary control."²¹ Hell and Kornblith argue that though beliefs may not necessarily be under one's voluntary control, it is still appropriate to evaluate them because they are not totally out of one's control.

In response to this objection, Feldman and Conee state, "Doxastic attitudes need not be under any sort of voluntary control for them to be suitable for epistemic evaluation."²² They give an example to support their claim. Imagine a person who involuntarily believes that light is on in his room due to a convincing perceptual experience. They argue that the belief is clearly justified even when the person cannot voluntarily acquire, lose, or modify the cognitive process that led to the belief. Conversely, they argue that an unjustified belief can equally be involuntary. Suppose a paranoid man involuntarily believes that he is being spied on with no fitting example. The belief is unjustified even when the belief is involuntary and he cannot alter the process that led to it.

Doxastic Limit

It is sometimes claimed that it is inappropriate to set epistemic standards that are beyond normal human limits. These limits are imposed by factors such as their experiences and cognitive abilities. For example, a person cannot choose that $1 + 1 = 3$, because this belief contradicts his experience. Even if he wants to believe that $1 + 1 = 3$, he would be unable to do so because of the limits of his cognitive abilities. Accordingly, doxastic limits explain why people cannot

²⁰ John Hell, "Doxastic agency," *Philosophical Studies* 43 (1983): 355.

²¹ Hilary Kornblith, "The psychological turn," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1982): 252.

²² Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 17.

believe what they want. Both Alvin Goldman and Edward Reeds recommend that epistemologists seek epistemic principles that can serve as ‘practical guides’ to belief formation. Edward Reed even argues that the limits of doxastic beliefs are determined by pragmatic factors, such as what is likely to be true or useful.²³ Thus, people are not to believe all the logical consequences of their beliefs, since they are unable to have the infinite number of beliefs that following such a principle would require. Evidentialism on its own side, does not recommend that people should believe all the logical consequences of their belief, however, it holds that some doxastic attitudes that fit a person's evidence are not within those capabilities. For instance, a person may not be able to believe that they can fly like a bird, but can still look at the evidence and conclude that it is not possible. The proponents of doxastic limits have a premise that there are some situations in which a person’s evidence is not within normal doxastic capabilities of people, and evidentialism deems that a person is justified in believing propositions which it is not within the normal doxastic capabilities of people to believe. Therefore, evidentialism is false.

To this, Feldman and Conee replies that the proposition that states that there are circumstances in which a person’s evidence is not within the normal doxastic capabilities of people to believe to be doubtful. There is no evidence to show that any attitude is beyond human limit. Hence, the claim cannot refute evidentialism. Feldman and Conee also argue that there is no basis to agree that whatever that is epistemically justified must be within normal human doxastic limit. It may just be to help people choose from epistemic alternatives before them. Even if there are situations when one has a doxastic attitude that were above human limits, it could still be justified according to the standard of justification asserted by evidentialism. For them, some standards are met only by going beyond normal

²³ Edward Reed, *Belief: A Pragmatic Picture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 108.

human limits. Just like there are standards of artistic excellence which no one can meet, similarly, epistemic justification can have standards beyond normal human limit.²⁴

New Evil Demon Argument

The new evil demon argument was first put forward by Alvin Goldman. Goldman describes the new demon argument from Descartes' evil demon argument.²⁵ He asks us to imagine that we are like the victim of Descartes' evil demon who deceives us about the external world, but not about our own internal states. The demon makes it falsely seem to us as if we have various sensory experiences as of a rich physical argument, though there is no fact such environment. Thus, the evil demon creates an illusion that makes people believe that they have certain experiences and evidence, when in reality, those experiences and evidence do not exist. This in turn makes the belief we form in responses to these experiences appear to us as reasonable when they are just illusions. Goldman then asks the evidentialists whether the belief formed by this could be counted as justifiable belief or not.²⁶

In response to the new evil demon argument proposed by Goldman, John Greco argues that Goldman's argument is flawed because it relies on an overly

²⁴ Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 19.

²⁵ Descartes employs the evil demon argument to argue that we cannot trust our senses because it is possible that an evil demon is deceiving us. In Descartes' example, he imagines that an evil demon has the power to control our experiences and make it seem as though it is real. He uses the argument to suggest that we cannot trust our senses, and that we must instead rely on reason to determine what is true. (See Descartes' Meditation on First Philosophy).

²⁶ Alvin I. Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?," in *Justification and Knowledge*, ed. George Pappas (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), 101.

narrow conception of evidence.²⁷ According to him, evidence is not limited to sensory experiences as Goldman thought, it also includes things like testimony and reasoning. In the same line of argument, Feldman argues that Goldman's argument is based on a misunderstanding of what it means to have evidence. Just like Greco, he argues that evidence is not limited to sensory experiences, and that Goldman's argument relies on false dichotomy between evidence and reasoning. He further argues that even if we were being deceived by an evil demon, we could still reason our way to the truth.²⁸

Earl Conee argues that even if we were being deceived by an evil demon, our beliefs would still be justified. For him, we have good reason to believe that we are not being deceived by an evil demon, and therefore, our beliefs are justified. For him, the fact that we have no evidence that we are being deceived is itself an evidence that we are not being deceived.²⁹ Conee's response is known as "the no-defeater argument."

Juxtaposition of Evidentialism with Reliabilism

Reliabilism is a theory of justification that is seen as an alternative theory of evidentialism. Roughly speaking, it is an epistemic view which holds that for a belief to be justified, it must have been formed through a belief-forming process which is reliable.

²⁷ John Greco, "Internalism and the New Evil Demon," in *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism*, ed. John Greco and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 170.

²⁸ Richard Feldman, *Epistemology and the Psychology of Belief* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 91.

²⁹ Earl Conee, *Reasons and Evidence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 35.

Most times, reliabilism is seen as a polar opposite to evidentialism. However, Feldman and Conee argue that it is an account of well-foundedness.³⁰ They explain that in reliabilism, a belief must actually be held just like WF, and it must be also be properly grounded like in the case of WF. Nonetheless, Feldman and Conee make a distinction between evidentialism and reliabilism saying that there is a difference between the conditions necessary for justification in WF and reliabilism. For WF, the condition necessary for justification is evidence. Reliabilism, on the hand, a belief is justified when it is form through belief-forming process that reliably leads to true beliefs. Apparently, it seems clear that reliabilism and WF are different concepts for reliabilism deals with the notion of belief-forming process and the notion of reliability for the justification of a belief, while WF deals with only evidence. In spite of this difference, Feldman and Conee think that the two may be extensionally equivalent. However, the question of equivalence depends on the resolution of the two unclarities in reliabilism: notion of belief-forming process and notion of reliability.

They explain that the unclarity on the belief-forming process arises because every belief is caused by sequence of events which are instances of many types of causal processes. Since the sequence of events leading to belief are instances of many causal processes, the question is, which of these processes are relevant? The sequence might be perceptually-based, it may also be mentally based and what have you. These processes have degrees of reliability no matter how reliability is determined, however, there is no definite answer to the process that is more relevant. Feldman and Conee further argue that “reliability have given little attention to this matter, and those that have specified relevant kinds have not done so in a way that gives their theory in intuitively acceptable extension.”³¹

³⁰ Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” 25.

³¹ Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” 26.

On the second unclarity which lies with the notion of reliability, Feldman and Conee argue that “reliability is fundamentally a property of kinds of belief-forming processes, not of sequence of particular events.”³² As seen above, there is a problem on determining the belief-forming process that is relevant. Consequently, there is a problem in determining the process that could make a reliable belief. Goldman tries to resolve this by saying that a process is reliable if it tends to produce true beliefs more often than false beliefs.³³ For example, if a process tends to produce more true beliefs about the weather than false beliefs, then it is a reliable process for forming beliefs about the weather. Kornblith also argues that a process is only reliable if it is an appropriate process for forming beliefs about the subject matter at hand.³⁴ For example, looking out the window might be a reliable process for forming beliefs about the weather, but it would not be a reliable process about the history of France.

Feldman and Conee argue that the different processes of forming belief for reliabilism are unclear, therefore, to make it more precise, it needs to be extensionally equivalent to WF. They explain that this is only possible when there is only one reliable process of two belief-forming processes. One kind has all the sequence of events leading to a belief that is based on fitting evidence; the other has all the sequence of events leading to a belief that is not based on fitting evidence. If a notion of reliabilism can be found on the former, then it is reliable, but if it is on the latter, it is unreliable. It is only by this way that WF could be extensionally equivalent to reliabilism.³⁵

³² Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” 26.

³³ Alvin Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 9.

³⁴ Hillary Kornblith, *Knowledge and its Place in Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 15.

³⁵ Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” 27.

Evaluation

From the foregoing, it seems unarguable that evidentialism is a core theory of justification that is solely dependent on evidence. One can argue that it is a plausible theory of justification especially on its non-circularity and avoidance of infinite regress problem.³⁶ Laurence Bonjour argues that any theory of justification that is not evidentialism must either be circular or regressive. According to Bonjour, any theory that requires some other belief to justify a belief must either be circular (because it requires the belief to be justified in order to justify itself) or regressive (because it requires an infinite chain of beliefs to justify belief).³⁷ For him, evidentialism is the only theory that avoids both of these problems because the evidences required for one's belief in a claim are traced back to the agent to justify the belief and not to any other object. Thus, evidentialism avoids the circularity and infinite regress problem.

Also, one cannot deny that its effect is apparent in our world today as one is asked to present an evidence to his claim in almost all situations. For instance, in court cases, a person could be easily acquitted in the presence of an overwhelming evidence for his innocence. This clearly shows that the effect of evidentialism is not only bound to the field of epistemology but to our everyday-life.

³⁶ Infinite regress is a situation where a series of positions lead to an infinite chain. For example, the question of which came first between chicken or egg? To answer this question, one must determine whether the chicken or egg was the cause of the other. However, if one says that the chicken was the cause of the egg, one must also determine what caused the chicken to exist. This causes an infinite regress of causes, since one can also ask for the cause of the cause of the chicken, and so on.

³⁷ Laurence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 122.

Conversely, evidentialism is too subjective and could easily lead to skepticism. This is because it relies heavily on the individual's personal interpretation of the evidence. For instance, a person who is colour-blinded could easily say that the colour of his shoe is pink when in normal visual perception is red. Evidentialism would explain that the colour-blinded person is justified for believing that his shoe is pink instead of red because according to evidentialism, his belief is based on a fitting evidence which comes from the person's visual perception. This poses a problem to evidentialism for it fails to account for a bad evidence like in the example even when the person is justified in holding onto his belief.

Additionally, evidentialism ignores the role of factors such as intuition and emotion in forming beliefs. For instance, when a person believes that he is been lied to but has no evidence, evidentialism would conclude that the person's belief is unjustified because there is no fitting evidence. Evidentialism requires that there should be evidence for all beliefs making it highly demanding, therefore, creating an unrealistic standard.

Furthermore, evidentialism is also circular just like many other epistemic theories of justification. It requires that there should be evidence for all beliefs, but also requires that the evidence should be itself justified like in WF. This can lead to the problem of infinite regress because one would continue to trace the evidence of the evidence required to justify a belief through an infinite number of evidences. Thus, evidentialism does not totally address the problem of circularity and infinite progress properly.

Conclusion

Apparently, this paper has examined critically evidentialism as a theory of justification mainly from the view of Richard Feldman and Earl Conee. From the foregoing, one could see that evidentialism considers evidence as a prerequisite for any justified belief, thus for one to say that a belief is justified is

to say that there is a fitting evidence for that belief. From the objections to evidentialism and a counter-response by evidentialism, one could attest that the theory is highly developed for epistemic justification. However, evidentialism is not itself flawless for it lays much emphasis on one's evidence which is highly subjective and could easily lead to skepticism. although evidentialism as proposed by Feldman and Conee avoids the problem of circularity and infinite regress by tracing one's evidence to the individual himself without respect to any other agent, it fails to address the problem totally because on one hand, it requires for one's evidence to be well-founded on another evidence which in turn could be founded on another evidence leading to the problem of circularity and infinite regress it avoids. Nevertheless, evidentialism is a plausible theory of justification but it could be made more plausible if it adopts critical methods to examine individual evidences irrespective of the degree of evidences, in order to establish a more fitting evidence that would be unquestionable for epistemic justification. Conclusively, evidentialism seems to be a theory that would stand the test of time in epistemic field. However, as evident in the above discourse, it needs some modifications that would make it a more plausible theory of epistemic justification.

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