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My Position on Evidentialism or Non-Evidentialism

Evidentialism is a belief in the religious philosophy and it is subjected to the availability of evidence to believe in a thing because it cannot be done otherwise. This belief was put forward by W.K. Clifford in 1876 in his essay The Ethics of Belief and he made an argument that evidence is a prerequisite for believing in anything. His this believe contradicted the earlier religious moral philosophies that highly believed in religious principles and teachings without any evidence. Clifford’s argument suggests that he does not believe in abstractness and instead insists on the concreteness of things in general. He also happened to be a member of metaphysical society and in the Victorian era, biblical criticism was emerging along with Darwin's theory of evolution. These incidents highly influenced many philosophers to question the relation between religion and morals. Moreover, they suggested that this relationship is eroding the core of Victorian society or humanity in general. Clifford also shared this belief and proclaimed that evidentialism contrasts with moral values because it challenges religious views. He stated that science and scientific methods should be incorporated in the social sphere for the masses' social growth and achieving moral truth. He links this notion to the negative effects of ungrounded believes in a society. William James rejected Clifford’s idea and said that evidence cannot be provided in every scenario when it comes to life. Besides, sentiments are central to life because belief in a thing removes the traces of skepticism and uncertainties. Moreover, he did not deny the reason behind evidence altogether but he gave an example and proclaimed that in matters of heart, one cannot make decisions based on objective facts. According to my belief, Non-Evidentialism is a sounder belief than evidentialism based on subjective opinion, beliefs, and moral values.

Subjective opinions are based on personal experiences and these experiences affect the thought process of individuals. on the other hand, one has to take prompt actions and skepticism delays the call of action. James's point makes sense that one cannot wait for evidence if the situation demands a prompt response because he focuses more on "will to believe". Moreover, subjective opinions do not necessarily need evidence because they stem from beliefs. I believe that things are both abstract and concrete. For instance, natural order, spirituality, and divinity are such things that cannot be seen with a naked eye but one believes in it because they appear true to him. Similarly, objective opinion can be formed easily because in that scenario one generally follows the rules of the group. Unlike evidentialists believe, pragmatism is an alien reason to non-evidentialists because they cannot reject the significance of subjective observations. In both religious and social avenues, when a moral cause is at stake people cannot wait for the right reason to address the cause. In non-evidentialist philosophy, morality and logic overpower evidence. Moreover, objective opinions can be at a risk too and this fact cannot be eliminated just because a large number of people choose to wait for a justification. Besides, subjective opinion ensures a person’s own free will to choose whatever side he wants to without the pressure of any external force. Also, religion is a matter of personal choice and it does not need any kind of justification to follow a certain religion or faith. the maxim of objectiveness loses its credibility over here. This is a tool employed to criticize believers and offer an extensive critique of religion and religious practices.

Belief plays an integral role in non-evidentialist philosophy because it addresses the question of God and his existence. One cannot view God but still believe in him and his presence through the power of belief. Agnostics rejects this idea because God cannot possess a human form or cannot give concrete evidence of his presence but he is everywhere and controls everything in this world. Through the power of belief, one wants to accept or reject things and this may not involve reason or logic at times. For instance, in daily lives, people make decisions based on the power of belief and their free will. Besides, prayer is another important aspect that shows believe in God and his divine plans. Belief and faith go side by side, people show faith in something because they believe in it. Reasoning affects the belief as well but it has its link with a heart more because at times reason fails too. moreover, God is a divine force and no one can deny his presence whether they believe in him or not because he provides for all human beings and controls the system of this world. Belief in God is a more internal matter as it involves both faith and beliefs. Spirituality is a great example of connecting with God without sensory experience. One cannot rely on reason in such matters but he has to show true faith and believe wholeheartedly. Moreover, if a person stops trying because he cannot see any concrete evidence, he will waste more time because divine signs are everywhere for people to see and take inspiration from. James suggests that one cannot avoid risk if he delays action by waiting for evidence or a solid reason to believe in something, instead he asserts that if one truly believes in a cause, it involves risks nonetheless but one cannot do without it. For an evidentialist school of thought, religion does not exist and they offer their criticism by calling it by a hypothetical version of the truth. The connection of faith is with what appears true to the heart and not mind because religion will always manifest itself as hypothetical for a non-believer or agnostic because they do not see any value in faith and talk about morality.

Morality shares proximity with both subjective opinion and power of belief because it requires prompt action in times of injustices and if one will wait for evidence or justifications, injustices will prevail in that society. Moral actions do not wait for evidence because they directly affect humanity and the human cause. Clifford's argument that religious teachings and morality are not interlinked seem irrelevant because religion makes a clear distinction between what is moral and what is not. Moral rules cannot be made on skepticism because no one can afford indecisiveness and one have to do without it. In this regard too, evidentialism and its maxim of being certain to action cannot be trusted. Evidentialist doctrine cannot be adopted for a longer period because things occur in abstract order too. Had it been for evidence, no one would have witnessed the age of Enlightenment or revolutions because people put their faith and acted on moral causes at once. Morality in a time of injustice and chaos becomes a responsibility and necessity in saving human values from collapse. In religious claims, it becomes the moral responsibility of a follower to act as advised by the divine orders. Similarly, in society, a ruler or law administrative authorities do not necessarily find evidence and in such a situation, moral values play a role and act as a decisive factor.

Evidentialism is a philosophy nonetheless but it does not count as a morally driven philosophy because it denies the role of subjective opinions. It also rejects the role of faith and power of belief in the life of a religious follower or any social worker. Besides, it confuses morality with religion because according to Clifford religion corrupts moral values but this is not the case because religion gives a sense of moral acts and immoral acts when evidence cannot be provided. Based on my religious beliefs and informed moral sense, I support the idea of non-evidentialism.