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# The role of evidence in deference to epistemic authority

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## Résumé

Deference to epistemic authority (DEA) is a strange way to form a belief: it indicates that a subject *S* lacks direct reasons to believe a proposition *p*. But this feature is shared by deference to any testimony. The specificity of DEA lies in the normative influence that the authority *A*’s belief has on *S*’s belief: *S ought to* defer and sometimes despite her own reasons for *p*. Can this normativity be explained, as traditional epistemology would have it, solely by the presence of evidential reasons to believe?

This paper aims at understanding the different types of reasons one has for DEA, and whether they should be exclusively evidential for DEA to be rational. I propose an evidentialist account of DEA based on the epistemic significance of higher-order evidence, particularly of evidence of epistemic position (EEP)- which is meant to explain the normative power of the authority’s belief as a function of the evidential strength of that position. I then develop two potential objections against the thesis that evidence is sufficient for a rational *assessment* of epistemic authority. The first one describes the relation of deference as a relation of trust, making reasons to defer of a fundamentally hybrid kind (motivational as much as evidential). The second problem admits of the evidentiality of those reasons but considers them as trivial due to their ubiquity. To respond to these problems, I distinguish between EEP and what I call indicators of epistemic position (IEP): both can be used rationally, but for different goals. EEP increases rational confidence in *p*, and can therefore be a criterion to form or revise a belief, while using IEP can be zetetically rational- as cues to *pay attention* to what is being said. I show the importance of this distinction for the epistemic rationality of DEA.

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**Mots-Clés:** epistemic authority, evidence, reasons, rationality, trust, testimony, attention