

PREFACE

This dissertation attempts to present and develop in a systematic way one of the central issues in contemporary epistemology that concerns the notion of justification as it applies to empirical knowledge. The particular issue is about the two alternative approaches to justification: (1) foundationalism and (2) coherentism and their reconciliation. The former claims that our non-basic beliefs are ultimately justified by our basic beliefs; the latter is the view that any of our knowledge claims is justified from within a coherent system. This presupposes an understanding of what justification is. In Chapter I, the concept is introduced and discussed from different angles. Chapter II is a detailed discussion of foundationalism as a theory of justification followed by a critical discussion of it in Chapter III. In Chapter IV a critical statement of the coherentist alternative is proposed. The main thrust of this working, attempting to bring the two conflicting theories closer, incorporating the truths in each, is undertaken in Chapter V. This chapter is crucial in many ways, in the light of Susan Haack's innovative theory, Foundherentism. This chapter is important not only because it contains an overview of contemporary discussions in epistemology but what is more important, it contains the conclusion of this work.

The topic of this dissertation concerns a problem in the history of epistemology which started from the fifties of the last century and is being pursued even today with great zeal under a different garb, e.g., the internalism-externalism controversy.

I have not tried to say something original and novel. All that I have tried to do is to restate, recount, reanalyze and take critical notice of prevailing ideas and views on the theme. In doing that I have occasionally followed the style and the exact language of the stalwarts, which I have acknowledged as far as possible.

My intention has although been clarification of concepts and ideas. Because philosophical theories, most of the time, stand in the need of clarification which is no mean endeavor for anyone providing this.

It has not be possible on my part to avoid some amount of repetition in my statement and discussion of positions and views. Since the theme is a dialectic between opposing positions, some overlapping appears to be inevitable, despite my attempts to avoid them. This, I hope, would not be treated as a flaw.

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