

CHAPTER II

THEORIES OF JUSTIFICATION

FOUNDATIONALISM

In this chapter and the next we shall concentrate on the two leading approaches to the nature of epistemic justification - the sides taken in the controversy: foundationalism and coherentism. We desist from discussing other forms of justification, for example, the reliabilist and the contextualist theories. The primary reason is that the theories under consideration, namely, foundationalism and coherentism represent the two most comprehensive and dominant theories of epistemic justification. The second reason, no less important, is the purpose at hand. We are trying to forge a compromise between these two rival theories. Accordingly, we deem it fit to concentrate on them, and thus, delimit the scope of our study. Lastly, although recent work in epistemology has made frequent references to reliabilist theory of justification, it has been dubbed by some as “weak foundationalism.”¹ Frederick Schmitt says that although falling under the rubric of “naturalized epistemology” reliabilism still smacks, to some extent, of foundationalism. Perhaps the basic statements dear to foundationalism simply are best characterized as the results of reliable processes.² Jane Duran has argued that reliabilism, as formulated in contemporary literature, may indeed be thought of as an analogue to foundationalism. She concludes saying: “Foundationalism, like the emperor of the fairy tale, has appeared in

a set of new clothes. The new clothing is called reliabilism...”³ Contextualism is proposed as an alternative to both foundationalism and coherentism. It is a critique of both on the ground that they overlook the contextual parameters – social practice, standard of justification prevalent in a community, etc. – essential to justification. We have not discussed contextualism either as it does not pertain to the specific problem at issue in our context

Foundationalism admits of considerable subsidiary varieties including radical foundationalism and modest foundationalism; coherentism yields subjectivist and objectivist species, among many others. While we shall clarify these two theories in most general terms we shall also not lose sight of the varieties in each.

It is worth noting that despite their many and sometimes vigorous disagreements, advocates of these two doctrines share a deeper commitment that binds them together as a community of inquirers. Knowledge for them all falls within a dimension of assessment, appraisal or evaluation, i.e., cognitive justification. Just what the justification of belief is founded on is exactly what they disagree about. They agree that it is indeed founded on something, and take it their task to be developing a theory of such foundations. Ernest Sosa remarks, “They are thus all varieties of a kind of foundationalism that we may dub ‘formal’ to distinguish it from the only one substantive foundationalism, that is, only one of its instances, coherentism being another.”⁴ It will be argued, in what follows, that each approach is fundamentally right from a particular point of view. Yet, each has a plausible core that can combine with the other. Consequently, an attempt

will be made to argue that this controversy is amenable to resolution. And a further attempt will be made to outline the resulting inclusive view.

Section I: Foundationalism

Our primary task here is to spell out precisely what foundationalism is, i.e., define ‘foundationalism’ as a theory of empirical justification. Foundationalism is so-called because it conforms to the idea of knowledge as an edifice constructed on, and supported by a foundation. It is a theory about whether our beliefs have a secure foundation. It is often stated to be the doctrine that knowledge has a structure like a building, the foundation of which supports all the rest, but itself does not need any support, at least, not of the structure, which is raised upon it. The foundation, of course, has to be secure enough to provide necessary support to the super-structure. The security is provided for by assuming that all beliefs that are justified are so by their relation to certain basic beliefs. Beliefs concerning basic facts are basic beliefs. According to Keith Lehrer, such theories of justification are called foundational “because they fit the metaphor of knowledge as an edifice supported by a foundation of basic beliefs.”⁵

A similar observation has been made by D.W. Hamlyn. He says:

Philosophers have sought to make (the) foundation unshakable ... there is a tendency to think of the corpus of knowledge as a building that is rising upward, and that those who increase the stock of knowledge are building

additional stories on to the existing rubric. If the foundations are not secure, the whole building will eventually come crashing to the ground.⁶

It is needless to add that by 'existing rubric' Hamlyn means something like the foundational beliefs. And while doubting whether this analogy does justice to the facts, he, nevertheless, avers that the architectural model is not without significance. The doubt about the foundation-superstructure model which is raised in a muted manner by Hamlyn has been forcefully stated by some other thinkers. And before we enter into our task of delineating the idea of foundationalism more fully we shall make an attempt in the initial point to state and tackle with the objection that has been raised with regard to the 'foundation' of foundationalism.

An objection has been raised by Jonathan Kvanvig⁷, and is recounted by James A. Martin. It is as follows:

An attempt to spell out precisely what foundationalism is, i.e., to define 'foundationalism' is deeply flawed. Foundationalism has no general nature, that given the metaphorical nature of 'foundationalism' and given that there can be no necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a metaphor, there cannot be an adequate definition of 'foundationalism'.⁸

Thus, it has been pointed out that the 'foundation' is pictorial, figurative, and metaphorical. The suggested consequence is that given the

metaphorical nature of 'foundationalism', looking for a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions is a pointless enterprise. In making this objection Knanvig has specifically in mind John Pollock⁹, Roderick Firth,¹⁰ Mark Pastin¹¹, James Cornman¹² and Alvin Plantinga.¹³ But the objection will be inclusive of the philosophers who have conceived foundationalism on the analogy of a structure on a foundation.

Martin has rejected the central contention of Knanvig's article that the fact that the idea of foundationalism is metaphorical rules out the possibility of there being necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the idea. That is to say, it does not deprive basic beliefs are beliefs foundationalism of a general nature, or make it unsuited for a definition. And his answer to Knanvig is based on the function of metaphor in language. What is the point of using metaphor any way? According to Martin:

When we use metaphor, it is ordinarily in a context which brings to prominence a particular set of features of the case being described. By using a metaphor we draw a sharp distinction between the appropriate and inappropriate features of the case in question - focusing on certain aspects, to make a fairly definite claim about it. The general context which occasions the foundations metaphor is epistemological discussion. One particular salient feature is typified by the regress argument. We come to believe that justifying one belief by a second, and that by a third, and the third by yet another and so on,

cannot go on to infinity or in circle. Something somehow which does not stand in need of justification by further beliefs seems essential. It is at this point the foundations metaphor makes its entrance.¹⁴

Thus, Martin makes the absolutely pertinent point that the context is here relevant. Metaphor is a sign of generality in language. It is the context, which determines which features of the case under consideration are relevant, which not. In the case under discussion, it is context which makes some features of findings relevant, and others not. Although some other use of a building type metaphor might focus on such things as size, colour, number of rooms, and the like, the epistemological use clearly centers on something else. “In the context of epistemological discussion, talk of support translates into talk of something like justification.”¹⁵

We wish to agree to Martin’s view that many things can be imagined which fit with the understanding of the metaphor, but to meet the needs posed by epistemological problems it has been used to make fairly definite claims. The critique of foundationalism cannot dispute the aptness of the metaphor in this regard. Martin concludes his article saying:

What has happened then, is that the diagnosis confuses claims made (about knowledge, or theories) via a metaphor, with claims made about the metaphor itself.¹⁶

Having cleared the ground of an initial objection let us now embark on the task of explicating foundationalism as a theory of justification. It will not be irrelevant to devote a few sentences on the historical background.

The classical argument for the view that epistemic justification has a two-tier structure originates in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. The argument for the existence of basic beliefs is due to Aristotle, although, he, certainly cannot be called a 'foundationalist' in the contemporary sense of the term. In Aristotle, the argument in its shortest form is that foundationalism is a correct account of the structure of justification since the alternative accounts fail. If the structure of justification is to avoid circularity, endless regresses, or unjustified starter-beliefs then foundationalism will be one of the most compelling accounts of structure of knowledge and justification. This explains, at least, in part, why foundationalism has been very prominent historically, and still widely held in contemporary epistemology. Aristotle's argument is a special case of what is commonly called a regress argument. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle formulated the following argument for the existence of what he called "nondemonstrative knowledge".

Whenever you know something, your knowledge is demonstrative (derived from premises) or nondemonstrative (gained without being derived from premises). If what you know is derived from premises, you must know the premises themselves for it is impossible to derive knowledge from unknown premises. But if your knowledge of these premises is demonstrative again, it must be derived from a further set of premises

which in turn you have either known nondemonstratively or on the basis of yet another set of premises, and so forth. Hence, whenever you know something, your knowledge is either derived from an infinite set of premises, or ultimately grounded in nondemonstrative knowledge. Knowledge, however, cannot be derived from an infinite set of principles. Hence, if you know anything at all some of your knowledge must be nondemonstrative.¹⁷

Another example of classical foundationalism is Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*.¹⁸ In the *Meditations*, Descartes first sets out to identify those items for which there could not be any grounds for doubt. Having done so, he seeks to use these items as a basis for showing that other items are known as well. Descartes attempts to prove the existence of an external world from 'I think' and 'I exist' which are taken to be foundational beliefs that are immediately justified and hence, of infallible certainty. Cartesian foundationalism is the view that our beliefs rest on the indubitability of the subjective dimension of the *cogito*. Here we have the privileged truth which is immune from the influence, not only of the natural doubt which one may feel concerning judgments about material things, but also of the hyperbolic doubt which is rendered possible by the fictitious hypothesis of the evil demon. Such a construal is regarded as radical foundationalism by William Alston in his "Two Types of Foundationalism".¹⁹ Descartes' foundationalism is currently not so popular because of the reason that the beliefs which may be infallible certainties, e.g., beliefs that 'I exist', 'I am thinking of the contents of the next chapter'

are extremely limited in number. They also lack sufficient substance to guarantee the certainty of our rich, highly inferential knowledge of the external world gained through our knowledge of physics, chemistry, biology, etc. Descartes also was not working with a true-justified-belief model of knowledge, which is germane to a theory of justification, foundationalism or coherentism or of any other variety. He rather required the indubitability or the infallibility of his foundations and not the immediately justified/free from infinite regress foundational beliefs.

Section II: Main Tenets of Foundationalism

What are the main tenets of foundationalism? Let us go back to the foundation-edifice model or metaphor we were talking about. To understand that foundation-edifice model or metaphor and to make it look less metaphorical we need to specify the mode of support involved. In contemporary discussions in epistemology, knowledge is thought of in terms of true justified belief (with or without further conditions); thus the mode of support involved is justification, and what gets supported is belief.

One may ask at this point whether the foundation itself needs a foundation or support. Foundationalism will say that a foundation needs no further support in the sense that it is not justified by its relation to other justified beliefs; in that sense, it does not 'rest on' other beliefs. It is the foundation point without a foundation. Such a justificatory conception of foundationalism remains prevalent in the recent epistemological literature,

by both its proponents and opponents. We may state some representative views as follows:

Richard Fumerton:

Foundationalism is a view about the structure of justification or knowledge. The foundationalist's thesis in short is that all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of non-inferential knowledge or justified belief.²⁰

M. Steup:

According to foundationalists, knowledge is structured like a building. They hold that, without foundational knowledge on which non-foundational knowledge rests, there couldn't be any knowledge at all.²¹

Peter Klein:

... [A]ll foundationalists think of warrant as arising autonomously in so-called basic propositions and being transferred to other propositions through permissible forms of inference.²²

Robert Audi:

Epistemological foundationalism is the view that "if... one has any justified beliefs at all, then one has at least one non-inferentially justified belief; any other justified belief one has is adequately justified by, and would not

be justified apart from its (positive) dependence on, at least one non-inferentially justified belief.²³

D. Howard-Snyder:

A particular belief of a person is basic just in case it is epistemologically justified and it owes its justification to something other than her other justified beliefs or their interrelations; a person's belief is non-basic just in case it is epistemologically justified but not basic. Foundationalists agree that if one has a non-basic belief, then – at rock bottom – it owes its justification to at least one basic belief.²⁴

William Alston:

Our justified beliefs form a structure in that some beliefs (the foundations) are justified by something other than their relation to other justified beliefs; beliefs that are justified by their relation to other beliefs all depend for their justification on the foundations.²⁵

Alston states foundationalism in another way, by what he describes as, the “turning the ‘foundation’ metaphor on its head. “Every mediate justified belief stands at the origin of a (more or less) multiple branching tree structure at the tip of each branch of which is an immediate justified belief.”²⁶ Two decades later he writes: The “most sober and most neutral epistemological sense” of the term ‘foundationalism’ “consists of viewing the overall epistemic structure of a particular subject’s beliefs in the

following way. Some of the beliefs enjoy a PES {positive epistemic status} without being based on other beliefs, and hence without owing that status to their relation to other beliefs.”²⁷

The above formulations show that there are two sorts of justified belief – mediately justified beliefs and immediately justified beliefs. When what justifies a belief is certain other justified beliefs so related to the first as to embody reasons or grounds for it, we may speak of mediately or indirectly justified beliefs. And where what justifies a belief does not include any such reference to other justified beliefs for its justification or warrant, we speak of directly or immediately justified beliefs. To revive the foundation-superstructure way of speaking; the latter group of beliefs is basic beliefs, which makes up a belief system’s foundation, as opposed to the former group of beliefs, which is non-basic and makes up a belief system’s superstructure. The beliefs that belong to the superstructure owe their justification ultimately to one or several beliefs in the foundation.

Thus, Keith Lehrer, who combines both justification and refutation of foundationalism, characterizes it as a theory of justification “in which there are basic beliefs which are self-justified and neither refutable nor justifiable by non-basic beliefs and which justify or refute all non-basic beliefs that are justified or refuted. These basic beliefs constitute the foundation of all justification.”²⁸ It is clear that mediate justification rests on immediate justification, i.e. on immediately justified beliefs. What this means is that, although the other beliefs involved in the mediate justification of a given belief be themselves immediately justified, if we continue in determining in each stage how the supporting beliefs are justified, we will arrive sooner or

later, at directly justified beliefs. These immediately or directly justified beliefs, as we have stated above, are also called basic beliefs or foundational beliefs. Lehrer says:

The foundational doctrine of foundation theories is that justification, whether it is self-justification of basic beliefs or derivative justification of non-basic beliefs, guarantees truth.²⁹

Foundationalism may be taken to make the following claims:

- (i) There are basic beliefs or directly justified beliefs – beliefs that are in some sense justifiably held, without resting on further evidence.
- (ii) A given person has a stock of directly justified beliefs sufficient to generate chains of justification that terminate in the indirectly justified beliefs he has, ultimately settling upon the beliefs with which he started. So a belief is justified if it is either itself basic or inferentially connected in some appropriate way to other justified beliefs.

We may notice that clause (ii) makes use of the idea of ‘justified beliefs’. This may strike us as circular. In fact it is not. Rather, foundationalism treats the class of justified beliefs as specifiable recursively. To specify a class recursively, foundationalism holds that there are basic beliefs and there are justification transmitting inferential connections – every justified belief ultimately getting its justification from one or more basic

beliefs. This is the hard core which is common to all versions of foundationalism.

It is, however, a mistake to think that a given belief, p is justified by a single other belief, q , thus creating a single line of decent. Such a line of thinking ignores the complexity of the situation in which an empirical belief is evaluated. Typically, the belief with which we start will rest on several beliefs, each of which will, in turn, rest on several other beliefs such that if we try to visualize the situation, the picture that emerges is that of a multiple branching from the original belief. "Hence, every mediately justified belief stands at the origin of a tree structure at the tip of a branch of which is an immediately justified belief."³⁰ So it has been argued that it is misleading to consider the foundationalist's view of justification as essentially linear.

The question is why we should regard some beliefs as ultimate or foundational. The main reason for holding foundational beliefs is to avoid vicious circle and infinite regress. Let us understand this. If S is justified in believing that p and if he depends on p^1 for the justification of p and again on p^2 for the justification of p^1 and so forth, then there are two possibilities. First, if S 's set of beliefs is finite, justification of p ultimately rests on a vicious circularity. Suppose that the set contains as members beliefs from p^1 - p^{20} , then p^1 might be justified by p^2 , p^2 by p^3 and so on with eventual circularity. The chain of justification produces a closed loop such that the belief that p is justified if the belief that p is justified. That leaves it completely open whether the belief that p is justified. Second, if S 's set of beliefs is not a finite set; justification of p leads to an infinite regress. When we are talking of indirect or mediate justification, it becomes a necessary

condition of such justification that the beliefs appealed to in justification be themselves already justified in some fashion: that an unjustified belief lends no credence to a belief that may follow from it. Now, the beliefs providing justification might also be justified indirectly, but such justification will introduce further beliefs, which have to be justified in some way. The justification of one belief would require the logically antecedent justification of one or more other beliefs, etc. This is a familiar problem, called “the regress problem.” It implies that justification has no terminus no matter how far we extend it. In that case, the necessary condition for the mediate justification of the original belief is not satisfied. Hence, there must be terminally justified beliefs or basic beliefs to put an end to the regress.

This view is forwarded by both classical foundationalists like C.I.Lewis and modern foundationalists like Anthony Quinton, Arthur Danto³¹, among others. Let us state one such representative view from Quinton:

If any beliefs are to be justified at all ...there must be some terminal beliefs that do not owe their credibility to others. For a belief to be justified it is not enough for it to be accepted, let alone merely entertained; there must also be good reasons for accepting it. Furthermore, for an inferential belief to be justified the beliefs that support it must be justified themselves. There must, therefore, be a kind of belief that does not owe its justification to the support provided by others. Unless this was so no belief would be justified at all, for to justify any belief would

require the antecedent justification of an infinite series of beliefs.³²

Keith Lehrer has stated explicitly that it is to prevent the possibility either of circularity or of regress that it is presumed that some beliefs have a foundational status.

Although, these philosophers have argued out their view in the context of an analysis of knowledge, the point they have made is equally relevant for a theory of justification.

What emerges from the above is that foundationalism has two aspects which are intertwined: (1) specifying the nature and importance of the ultimately justifying beliefs – the basic beliefs and (2) explaining the nature of justification conferred by basic beliefs upon the non-basic ones. Conflict among the foundationalists turns on the differences regarding how they conceive of the two tasks.

These two aspects represent two sets of principles of justification, viz., generation principles and transmission principles. The generation principles explain how justification is generated in basic beliefs by virtue of the latter's possession of some special properties. The transmission principles explain how these basic beliefs transmit their justification to non-basic beliefs. James Van Cleve, to whom the distinction is due, puts it in the following manner:

Foundationalism often sets forth principles specifying the conditions under which propositions of various types are justified; usually called epistemic principles, they fall into two groups: principles that tell us that propositions of certain types are justified independently of their logical relations to other propositions, and principles that tell us that if some propositions are already justified, then any proposition that stand in such-and-such relations to them are also justified. Principles of the first sort I call generation principles, since they are principles whereby justification is generated in the first place, and those of the second sort I call transmission principles, since they are principles whereby justification is transmitted from some propositions to others. Generation principles are used to lay the foundations, transmission principles to erect the superstructure.³³

According to him, Descartes' Clearness and Distinctness Rule is a generation principle. The best known list of non-deductive transmission principles, for him, is Chisholm's.³⁴

Section III: Forms of Foundationalism

There are many variants of foundationalism in recent epistemology, which differ from one another in important ways. Although, there is a general agreement among foundationalists regarding justification of beliefs, foundationalism has taken different forms. We shall attempt a brief sketch of

different types of foundationalism. Let us start with what is called the best example of foundationalism, the one offered by Roderick Chisholm.

Chisholm's Foundationalism

Chisholm has althrough defended the foundationalist theory of justification and has advanced what is perhaps the most carefully worked out version of foundationalism. He has refined foundationalism, which has characterized his approach to epistemology. There are three concepts which are basic to Chisholm's foundationalism. These are self-presenting states, basic propositions and directly evident propositions. There are some states of affairs that are self-presenting. A self-presenting state "is apprehended through itself."³⁵ Again, "desiring, hoping, wondering, wishing, loving, hating may also be self-presenting."³⁶ Propositions expressing these self-presenting states are called 'basic propositions'. Their epistemic state is that of being "directly evident". The relationship between the two, that is, 'self-presenting states' and 'directly evident' is stated by Chisholm thus: "if there is something that is 'directly evident' to a man, then there is some state of affairs that 'presents itself to him'. Thus, my belief that Socrates is mortal is a state of affairs that is 'self-presenting' to me."³⁷ He formulates the definition of self-presenting thus:

h is self-presenting for *S* at *t* = Df *h* occurs at *t*; and necessarily, if *h* occurs at *t*, then *h* is evident for *S* at *t*.³⁸

About the 'directly evident' Chisholm says: "we might think of the directly evident as that which 'constitutes its own evidence', for we have

characterized it in terms of what is self-presenting – in terms of that which is ‘apprehended through itself.’”³⁹ He presents the following definition of directly evident:

h is directly evident for S =Df h is logically contingent, and there is an e such that (i) e is self-presenting for S and (ii) necessarily, whoever accepts e accepts h .⁴⁰

What kinds of propositions turn out to be directly evident on Chisholm’s account? According to him, those propositions, which are directly evident for a person S , have to do in some way with S ’s mental states – his thoughts, beliefs, feelings, perceptual experiences etc. In his words:

Thinking and believing provide us with paradigm cases of the directly evident. Consider a reasonable man who is thinking about a city he takes to be Albuquerque, or who believes that Albuquerque is in New Mexico, and suppose him to reflect on the philosophical question, “What is my justification for thinking that I know that I am thinking about a city I take to be Albuquerque, or that I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico?” ... The man would reply in this way: “My justification for thinking I know about a city I take to be Albuquerque, or that I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico, is simply the fact that it is in New Mexico”. And this reply fits our formula for the directly evident.

What justifies me in saying that a is F is simply the fact that a is F .⁴¹

Thus, saying that a belief is directly evident means simply repeating the statement describing the belief. It is justified by reiteration. What justifies me in believing that I seem to have a headache is simply the fact that I seem to have a headache. If I do believe that Socrates is mortal then ipso facto it is evident to me that Socrates is mortal. If I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico then it is evident to me that it is in New Mexico and so on. Examples of other propositions are those about what a person believes, what he seems to perceive and what he seems to remember, feel, think, etc. It is to be noted that Chisholm does not equate the self-presenting with the directly evident but rather sees the former as a sub-set of the latter. While all propositions about self-presenting states of affairs are directly evident, the latter includes other propositions. This is because Chisholm wants to include in this category all propositions which must be accepted. For example, the proposition that 'I am in pain' expresses a self-presenting state and is consequently, directly evident. If one accepts it one also accepts the proposition that 'Someone is in pain'. It is also directly evident for it is logically entailed by 'I am in pain'. But although entailed by what is self-presenting, it is not itself self-presenting, though directly evident. We may explain the logical relation of entailment in this manner. The proposition expressed by the sentence, "I exist", for example, is directly evident simply because it is entailed by the self-presenting proposition expressed by the sentence "I seem to have an headache". In like manner, the proposition expressed by the sentence, "There is someone who is thinking" is directly evident simply because it is logically implied by the self-presenting proposition expressed by the sentence "I am thinking". In neither case the implied proposition meets the conditions needed for self-presenting propositions as presented by Chisholm. Hence, neither of them is a self-

presenting proposition. On Chisholm's view, then, the concept of the directly evident is wider than the concept of the self-presenting. Whatever is self-presenting is evident, but what is evident is not necessarily self-evident.

We may note that the commonly accepted perceptual or observational propositions, such as, "I see something red before me" or "The apple before me is red" are not considered as directly evident in Chisholm's scheme. For they would be justified by reference to still other propositions. The foundational or anchoring self-presenting states and their corresponding beliefs consist of a variety of 'seemings'. What one seems to believe, seems to hope for or fear, and most importantly, seems to perceive, are all self-presenting, that is, if one is in any one of these states then that belief of his is certain. Chisholm, following up the suggestion of one of his colleagues, Curt Ducasse,⁴² developed an adverbial theory of sensory experiencing. He urged that when referring to internal experiencing we replace talk of 'sense-data' with adverbial expressions such as, "being appeared to redly" or "I am appeared redly to". In Chisholm's view, having the property of 'being appeared to redly' is self-presenting and thus certain. The main advantage of this artificial and awkward way of speaking is avoidance of ontological and epistemological puzzles about sense-data. This mechanism lays bare a fundamental characteristic of Chisholm's approach to employ a fertile primitive terms together with simple logical relationships to define other more complex concepts – in the present context – the 'directly evident', 'certain', etc.

Chisholm's foundationalist position is undoubtedly established when he says that those truths of fact that are known but are not directly evident

may be said to be indirectly evident. What we know of external objects, other people's mind, and of past fall within this group. And the indirectly evident is based upon or known through what is directly evident.

All that Chisholm wanted for his foundationalist position is directness or immediacy of justification. He never bothered about whether these are infallible, indubitable or anything privileged as regards their access to truth. For coming out of the problem of regress it is enough that we find a bed-rock in basic propositions which are directly evident. 'Directly evident', 'self-justified' and 'self-warranted', all these are taken by Chisholm, to mean the essentially same.

Major changes are perspicuous in Chisholm's later views as a result of the evolution of his own thinking and as a reaction to criticisms brought against his theory. A foundationalist still, the foundation seems to have changed its nature. We may have occasion to return to some of these changes introduced by Chisholm.

Other Forms of Foundationalism:

In this section we shall state and explain different forms of foundationalism. Foundationalism may be radical or modest. The Radicalists demand that the basic beliefs are infallible or incorrigible. Ernest Sosa calls this view classical foundationalism. Descartes, in his Meditations is a radical foundationalist. For him basic beliefs are immediately justified. They are not only infallible

and indubitable guaranteeing the truth of what they report, but are generated by reason. The beliefs grounded on basic beliefs are actually entailed by them. The certainty inherent in the ground is imparted to what is grounded. For the modest foundationalist, basic beliefs are neither infallible nor incorrigible. Self-warrantedness is all that is required for a belief being basic. Mark Pastin, for example, has devised a foundationalism which is not dependent, like radicalism, upon the notion of incorrigibility. He calls it 'modest' because the basic beliefs have the property of "self-warrant", rather than some broader or stronger claim of 'incorrigibility' or 'infallibility'. Pastin's basic account of self-warrant is: "...warranted in believing ... to some degree, however slight, without inductive, evidential support."⁴⁵

Alston distinguishes between 'simple' or 'epistemic' foundationalism on the one hand and 'iterative' or 'meta-epistemic' foundationalism on the other. He defines the two positions as follows:

Simple Foundationalism: For any epistemic subject, S there are p-s such that S is immediately justified in believing that p.

Iterative Foundationalism: For any epistemic subject, S there are p-s such that S is immediately justified in believing that p and S is immediately justified in believing that he is immediately justified in believing that p.⁴⁶

In other words, simple foundationalism is about the status of foundations, namely, that they are immediately justified beliefs. Iterative foundationalism requires of foundations not only that they are immediately justified, but also that the believer be immediately justified in believing that

they are immediately justified. Alston argues that the regress argument which shows that the only alternative to admitting epistemic foundations is circularity of justification or an equally unpalatable infinite regress of justification supports simple foundationalism. Hence, it would seem that foundationalism has a chance of working only in its simple form. It is simple foundationalism which meets the demands and aspirations that foundationalism is designed to satisfy.⁴⁷ We concur with Alston. We being concerned with simple justification and not with justification of justification, have not much use of iterative foundationalism.

Laurence Bonjour stipulates strong and weak versions of foundationalism thus:

Strong foundationalism is the view that the non-inferential warrant of... [certain empirical, contingent]...beliefs is sufficient by itself to satisfy the adequate-justification condition of knowledge and to qualify them as acceptable premises for the inferential justification of further beliefs.⁴⁸

A later version of it is as follows:

Strong foundationalists have typically made considerably stronger claims on behalf of basic beliefs. Basic beliefs have been claimed not only to have sufficient non-inferential justification to qualify as knowledge, but also

to be certain, infallible, indubitable or incorrigible (terms which are not very carefully distinguished).⁴⁹

By contrast:

...weak foundationalism would attribute initial credibility to all cognitively spontaneous beliefs. For such a version of foundationalism...spontaneous beliefs have this minimum degree of credibility – for which no empirical justification is thus ever offered.⁵⁰

According to BonJour, Roderick Firth (“Coherence, Certainty and Epistemic Priority”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, LX (1964) and Nicholas Rescher (*Methodological Pragmatism*, Basil and Blackwell (1976) have held versions of weak foundationalism.

Section IV: Basic Beliefs

What all foundationalist views have in common is the idea that any sort of appeal to justification unleashes either circularity or infinite regress. Hence the only alternative is to fall back on foundational beliefs which have the epistemic privilege of having no need of justification. When we say that foundational beliefs are not justified, we do not mean to say that they remain unjustified. What we mean is that, they are not justified via any sort of inferential appeal to further beliefs. They are self-justified or self-evident.

It is clear from the literature that the point of convergence among foundationalist theories is reliance upon this type of beliefs - the basic or foundational beliefs to support all other beliefs. Naturally, the characterization of such a type of belief becomes crucial. So the question is: What makes a belief basic?

The foundational beliefs or propositions have been variously described as “basic” or “insightful”. They are called basic in the sense that they are not derivative, i.e., not derived or inferred from any other beliefs, and there must be some experiences which give rise to these beliefs. They are also called basic in a second sense. It is that they provide the unshakeable foundation for all empirical knowledge. The process of empirical testing is said to terminate with these beliefs. For any belief to be justified there must be a class of basic, non-inferential beliefs to bring the regress of justification to a halt.

Basic beliefs are beliefs concerning basic facts. Keith Lehrer says that a more precise formulation of foundation theories is possible by specifying the conditions that must be met for a belief to be basic. According to him, as for many, foundationalism is associated with empiricism. There are indeed foundational theories which take the basic beliefs to be non-empirical in character – simple logical or mathematical truths, often thought of as self-evident. We shall restrict ourselves to foundational theory of empirical knowledge.

Basic beliefs are empirical in character. They are about what is immediately presented to our senses. They are accorded special status to be

statements of first person perceptions. It has been claimed that basic beliefs, with which justification comes to an end, are identifiable by their content. To say the same thing, in other words, is to say that only beliefs with a certain kind of content have the potential to be basic. For example, many foundationalists have held that one source of basic beliefs is our immediate awareness of our own thoughts and sensations. They have to do with the contents of experience of how things appear to us. The literature cites specifically the ubiquitousness of perceptual processes in the production of basic beliefs. Beliefs such as “I have a headache”, “This looks to me to be red” or “This is louder than that” are basic beliefs. My belief that I have a headache is foundationally justified by my having a headache now. An observation statement describes what constitutes the content of a basic belief. Basis beliefs are epistemologically (conceptually too) prior to non-basic beliefs – immediate experiential beliefs being epistemologically prior to beliefs about the external world. As to how basic beliefs are justified many foundationalists have pointed out how they are privileged: that they are certain, indubitable, incorrigible, etc. Basic beliefs need not be all these at once. Foundational beliefs are claimed to be epistemologically privileged without being indubitable. They are claimed to be incorrigible. Indubitability is equivalent to certainty.

William Alston⁵¹ has distinguished three senses of indubitability: (i) logical impossibility of entertaining a doubt, (ii) psychological impossibility of entertaining a doubt and (iii) impossibility of there being any ground for doubt. Of these, according to Alston, the one which is distinctively epistemic is the third, “impossibility of there being any ground for doubt.” He also calls it “normative indubitability.” Infallibility is a strong notion. It makes

the strong claim that a person's beliefs about his current mental states are never mistaken; that it is impossible that they are falsely held. Indubitability is a weaker form of infallibility. A belief is indubitable means that no one having the belief can be in doubt about that. Indubitability thesis does not commit one to the impossibility of mistakes but the weaker claim that no one could have grounds for questioning the accuracy of one's beliefs. Alston shows that incorrigibility is a still weaker derivative of infallibility as no one succeeds in showing that a person is mistaken about his current mental states. We can make rough distinction, in this way, between these concepts, following Alston.

There are foundationalists like C.I.Lewis who are alleged to have used 'infallible', 'indubitable' and 'incorrigible' interchangeably when these have significantly different meanings. Lewis particularly stresses on the infallibility character and he relates infallibilism with justifiedness.⁵² There is no distinction to be made, where foundational beliefs are concerned, between their being immune from error and their being immune from unjustifiedness. This is a strong foundationalist theory, which speaks of basic beliefs to be immune from error, and as such maximally justified.

However, Ayer, who treats the full range of skeptical problems within a broadly foundational perspective, speaks of basic beliefs to be incorrigible. He formulates the concept of incorrigibility in the context of basic statements incorporating our basic beliefs. He says:

To say that these statements are incorrigible is not, however to say that one's assessment of their truth or

falsehood cannot ever be revised. [T]hese statements are incorrigible in the sense that one's ground for accepting them must be perfect.⁵³

Now, what does Ayer mean by perfect 'grounds for accepting them?' The perfect grounds include, being made by "the right person, in the right circumstances and at the right time." It is in this sense only that a statement may be looked upon as basic, not being subjected to any further tests, being fortified by the perfect grounds. In like manner, basic beliefs are incorrigible means that they cannot be doubted or denied by other persons or by the person himself at other times; but given the experience he is having then, the belief is perfectly assured and warranted. We may say that the concerned person has a privileged access to the content of his experience at the time and in the manner he is having them and this makes his belief incorrigible. Following Keith Lehrer we may restate this account in a more rigorous manner as follows:

S has an incorrigible belief that *p* if and only if it is logically impossible that *S* believes that *p* and *p* is false.⁵⁴

If we combine these two notions of incorrigibility provided by Ayer and Lehrer respectively we may put the matter in this way:

It is not the case that *S*'s belief that *p* is incorrigible and *p* is false for *S* at the time at which he is entertaining the belief, for the content of the belief is what *S* is really experiencing at that time.

This may be a reason why many epistemologists with a foundational leaning have sought a phenomenalist foundation of empirical knowledge.

What makes foundationalism seem right regarding basic beliefs being incorrigible is the fact that our cognitive access to the world is initiated by sensory experience. It is our sensory experiences that lend credence to our beliefs such as “This looks to me to be red”, “This appears to me to be soft”, etc. Let us elucidate this with an illustration. If I somehow manage to in the presence of my current experiences that I am holding a large blue balloon in my hand, and this belief fits into a system of theoretical and observational beliefs that I also get myself to accept, nevertheless the balloon beliefs will fail to be epistemically justified; it will be rendered unreasonable by my entirely unballoonish experiences. Also, coherence with other beliefs cannot justify attributing to oneself experiences that are not actually undergone. If I had to the concocted system of beliefs about a balloon in my hand, the belief “It appears to me as though a large blue balloon is in my hand”, the belief would fail to be incorrigible in spite of its coherence with the others. For it will patently come in conflict with what I really do experience. Such considerations uphold a very clear relationship between incorrigibility of our beliefs and having certain experiences.

C.I. Lewis used to claim that basic beliefs are “certain” or “infallible”. He relates basic beliefs to ‘given’ experiences so that their justification is derived from other cognitive or at least quasi-cognitive states, but not from further beliefs. He says at the beginning of Chapter 7 of his book, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*,

Our empirical knowledge rises as a structure of enormous complexity, most parts of which are stabilized in measure by their mutual support, but all of which rest at bottom, on direct feelings of sense. Unless there should be ... something apprehensible and statable, whose truth is *determined by given experience and is not determined in any other way*, there would be no non-analytic affirmation whose truth should be determined at all, and no such thing as empirical knowledge.⁵⁵

Also, at the close of his analysis of knowledge Lewis commits himself to this thesis:

... the foundation stones which must support the edifice [of empirical knowledge] are still those of truth which are disclosed in given experience.⁵⁶

R.M. Chisholm, who does not deny that each man's empirical knowledge rests on a foundation of self-justifying states, has argued, like Lewis, that the doctrine of the 'given' is not a myth. He further says that we are led to the doctrine of the 'given' when we attempt to answer certain questions about justification. We shall have occasion to elaborate Chisholm's position later in this chapter. For the present we remain content with simply mentioning his support for the doctrine of the 'given'.

There are two important points to notice. (i) Foundationalism is a thesis about the structure of justified belief and (2) so leaves open a number

of substantive questions over which proponents of the view may disagree, e.g. over the content of immediate justified beliefs. In particular there is hardly any claim nowadays about the basic beliefs being infallible, indubitable or incorrigible even though such notions are associated with more traditional versions of the view. The question now is about the *degree of warrant* the foundational beliefs enjoy.

Section V

Justification-transfer

What is central to any successful foundational theory is an account of how the basic or directly evident propositions, which serve as the foundation of knowledge, can confer evidence on non-basic or indirectly evident propositions. What entitles us to make the transition from foundational beliefs to non-foundational ones? In other words, what makes it possible to pass from our immediate experiences to the existence of physical objects, from introspective awareness to presumption of truth of mental states and so on? There are also questions about the sort of *epistemic warrant* the immediately justified beliefs provide for mediately justified beliefs. The degree of warrant the foundational beliefs themselves enjoy

The line of reasoning adopted by the foundationalists is that the transition is like that of from premise to conclusion. We know that rules of logic may validly take us from premise to conclusion. But here the relation

is somewhat different – rules of deduction or rules of induction are of no help here. At least Chisholm is of that view. He says:

...Any principles that enable us to derive the indirectly evident from the directly evident will not be the principle of deduction. Nor will they be the principles of induction.⁵⁷

Again,

...if the indirectly evident can be said to be made evident by what is directly evident, then there are principles of evidence other than the formal principles of deductive and inductive logic.⁵⁸

According to Chisholm, the connecting link between the directly evident propositions ('the foundation' of the system) and the rest of our system of justified beliefs consists of certain 'epistemic principles' which specify the conditions under which it is legitimate to proceed from certain directly evident beliefs to certain indirectly evident beliefs. An obviously important epistemic principle is the principle for justifying perceptual claims. This principle connects the primary type of directly evident propositions – those about 'self-presenting' states of affairs – with indirectly evident propositions about physical objects. The nature of inference is non-demonstrative.

The relation between the directly and the indirectly evident is a matter of great importance for Chisholm. And as a foundationalist he must explain

just how the former confers evidence upon the latter. Chisholm sets forth several epistemological principles in Chapter 4 of the second edition of *Theory of Knowledge* and listed them in the Appendix.⁴³ These are procedures or ways in which the indirectly evident can be said to be based upon the directly evident. These epistemic principles One of the most important of these principles, relevant for our present problem, runs as follows:

For any subject *S*, if *S* believes, without ground for doubt, that he is perceiving something to be *F*, then it is evident for *S* that he perceives something to be *F*.⁴⁴

Laurence Bonjour contends:

The most obvious way in which beliefs are justified is inferential justification. In its most explicit form, inferential justification consists in providing an argument from one or more other beliefs as premises to the justificandum belief as conclusion.⁵⁹

Some foundationalists, however, whom we may dub as ‘radical foundationalists’ insist, for such transmission, on entailment relations that guarantee the truth or the certainty of non-foundational beliefs. The relation between the two sets of beliefs is deductive and hence irreversible. If anything counts as an inferential justification relation, logical implication does ... provided it satisfies appropriate relevance and non-circularity requirements. Let us say a statement *X* properly entails a statement *Y* if and only if *X* semantically entails *Y*, where the entailment is relevant and non circular on any appropriate account. Thus, if anything counts as an

inferential justification relation, proper entailment does, in the sense that where X and Y are statements rather than sets of statements. "If X properly entails Y, then Y is justified for P if X is – provided P knows that the proper entailment holds and would believe Y in the light of it if he believed X".

This situation is analogous to what happens when the usual notion of deductive proof is applied, and owes much to deductive models of justification descended from Aristotle's theory of demonstration. The above explanation depends on conceptual considerations. We are not very sure about its acceptability so far as empirical knowledge is concerned. A physical object statement is not deducible from descriptions of our sense experiences. The relation is not demonstrative. There would not be any formal contradiction in admitting the existence of our sense experiences and yet denying the corresponding belief that a certain physical object exists. Whether it exists or not remains an open question.

Modest foundationalists are more flexible, allowing for merely probabilistic inferential connections that transmit justification. For example, a modest foundationalist can appeal to explanatory inferential connections, as when a foundational belief (e.g., the belief, I seem to feel wet) is best explained for a person by a particular physical object (e.g., the belief that the air conditioner overhead is leaking).

Various other forms of probabilistic inferences are available to the modest foundationalists, and nothing in particular requires that they restrict foundational beliefs to what one seems to 'sense' or to perceive.

CHAPTER II

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