

# **The Indispensability of Foundations in Epistemic Justification**

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## **Abstract**

Epistemic problems raised by the skeptics presuppose the lack of certainty and or justification. Any justification of a belief not secure with a basic structure is vulnerable to skepticism. The lack of a foundation makes a claim weak and creates problems of infinite regress or circularity. Based on this, three problems are connected with the theory of justification. Firstly, do our beliefs have a secure foundation? Secondly, if they do not have a secure foundation, how can they be justified? Thirdly, what are the considerations relevant for their justification? This indicates that the epistemologist is to offer conditions in which a high level of hypothesis can be obtained. Thus, the focus on foundationalism as a theory which proffers a basic justification of our beliefs has become imperative. The theory holds that, there are some basic propositions which carry with them their own justifications needing no support, thereby constituting the base or substructure upon which other beliefs rest. Thus in this paper, I contend that foundations are indispensable in any epistemic justification if we must resist the skeptic. This indispensable bottom is necessary and may be indubitable and incorrigible, as some hardcore phenomenal foundationalists have claimed.

**Keywords:** Justification, Basic, Foundations, Indispensable

## **1. Introduction**

Most problems in epistemology raised by the skeptics are as a result of the inability of the traditional epistemologists to arrive at certainty. Such epistemic inadequacy is presupposed by the lack of justification and even where justification is offered for any belief; skepticism still creeps in probably because such justification is not secure with a basic structure. Thus the moment any justification of a belief is insecure (unstable) or lacks a foundation, queries of how and why looms as challenges. This further suggests that such a justification is not only weak but creates more problems of infinite regress or circularity. Though epistemology is often explained as the theory of knowledge, current arguments indicate that such a significant feature of epistemology as a label has become inappropriate. More suitably, contemporary epistemology has been tagged the theory of justification. This shift is informed by the serious doubt about the possibility of attaining the kind of certainty that knowledge has been taken to involve. Based on this, three problems have been identified as having connection with the theory of justification and they bother on firstly, whether our beliefs have a secure foundation. Secondly, if our beliefs do not have a secure foundation, how can they be justified? Thirdly, what sorts of consideration are relevant for the justification of our beliefs? These queries suggest that the problem of epistemology is to specify the conditions in which a high level of hypothesis can be obtained. It is this very task that has made me to focus on foundationalism as a theory which proffers a basic justification of our beliefs. The key idea of the theory is that, there are some basic propositions which carry with them their own justifications needing no support, thereby constituting the base or substructure upon which other beliefs rest. The nature of this basic or foundational proposition is sought for in sense perception. I shall demonstrate how foundations are indispensable in any epistemic justification. This indispensable bottom is necessary and may be indubitable and incorrigible, as some hardcore phenomenal foundationalists have claimed. For it is only with such theories can we comfortably prove to the skeptic that some knowledge claims with terminal justifications are epistemic.

## **2. Theories of Epistemic Justification:**

It is pertinent to examine some of the theories of justification in epistemology especially, as contemporary epistemologists have focused on the justification of epistemic claims. Justification in this context means acceptable reasons or rationales for our epistemic claims or beliefs. This presupposes that it is not every belief that can be regarded as knowledge. Justification gives a belief or knowledge claim the required epistemic status.

There are different theories of justification that tend to determine knowledge or have epistemic status. Among these theories are foundationalism, Coherentism and foundherentism. These theories of justification are quite distinct from other kinds of theories like pragmatic, divine, moral, social and political theories of justification. As a demarcation, epistemologically justified beliefs are unlike any other kind tailored towards determining knowledge. However, a knowledge claim or belief that is not established justifiably is vulnerable to skepticism and fallibilism.

For a belief to be established justifiably entails evidential support or warrant. The support or warrant of a belief according to R. M. Chisholm (1981), could be self-presenting and "self-presenting properties are a source of certainty" (19). Example, if you think about reading your books, you have all the justification you need for believing that you are thinking about reading your books. This illustration shows that self-presenting properties are a source of certainty, which guarantees knowledge. Another clear example is the Cartesian 'cogito', which is self-presenting both empirically and demonstratively. That is, empirically you must exist to perceive and in the case of a priori, you must exist to think or reason. Both cases are self-presenting. John Kekes (1977) in his article "Recent trends and future prospects in

epistemology” noted the concern of contemporary epistemology in the theory of justification. This concern is predicated on the serious doubts about the possibility of attaining the kind of certainty that knowledge has been taken to involve.

There are problems that are connected with justification. The first is the question of whether our beliefs have a secure foundation. To answer this question, we shall consider the fundamental tenets of foundationalism that, beliefs have secure foundation. The second problem is on the strong arguments of the fallibilist. For the fallibilist, if our beliefs do not have any secure foundation, can they be justified? The skeptic in response would of course say no. Thus, can skepticism be countered by a non-foundational theory of rationale? Obviously the answer will be in the negative because being non-foundational presupposes equivocation, weakness and susceptibility to error. The third problem is that of the domain of justification itself. That is, what sorts of considerations are relevant to the justification of our beliefs or knowledge claims? This implies the problem of specifying the conditions in which certainty can be obtained. Whatever the conditions may be, they simply imply justification. A belief in this sense is understood as a state of mind in which propositions are taken to be true while justification serves as a supportive bridge to certainty, which indirectly makes our claims or beliefs worth knowing. This no doubt differs from the sources of knowledge, for the sources of knowledge have no connection with the idea of justification. According to Karl Popper as presented by D. W. Hamlyn (1970), a question such as what is the source of knowledge is itself mistaken. “The question of the source of knowledge is unimportant and irrelevant; the proper epistemological question is whether what we claim to know is true, and we try to find out the truth by examining and testing such assertions as are made, by, in other words, critical inquiry” (284). However, we cannot subject our goal to the Popperian falsification principle because our aim is not to test by any means but to establish evidential theories. It is plausible to note that having a true belief is only part of what it is to have knowledge; you also need justifying such knowledge claim.

### **2.1. The Foundationalist Theory of Epistemic Justification**

Suffice it to say that the justification of beliefs without foundations becomes more skeptical than knowledge without justification at all. Thus, the theory of justification is a category of foundationalism, for it is the foundation that is given as evidence or warrant for any belief we may hold. By foundations we mean the basic structure, the underlying framework, base or substructure of a thing, which gives support to the superstructure. As an epistemic connection, it is conceived as an impregnable layer. As an epistemic system, foundations or theory of foundationalism place emphasis on the basic structure enabling our beliefs to be justified. In this sense, foundations of knowledge are synonymous with certainty. Accordingly Stephen Cade Hetherington (1966) opines that; “Basic knowledge is like the foundation of a large building. Everything else depends on it in order to stand tall. The foundation is as basic as it gets within that building. The foundation could stand without the superstructure; the superstructure cannot stand without the foundation” (147).

From the above expression, Hetherington presents an architectural explication of what the theory of foundationalism entails. Furthermore, the theory of foundationalism according to William P. Alston (1976) is often stated as the doctrine whereby knowledge constitutes a structure where the foundation supports the rest but they themselves need no support (165). The foundationalist thinks of knowledge in terms of true justified belief (with or without further conditions); thus the mode of support involved is justification, and what gets supported, a belief. Alston portrays the asymmetrical relations between the foundation as a basic structure and the belief that is supported as a superstructure. In other words, there is an unreciprocal relation between the substructure and the superstructure.

R. M. Chisholm (1981) sees knowledge as foundational because it includes basic apprehensions among the sources of epistemic justification. I hold the opinion that by looking for the foundations of knowledge as a means of justifying our beliefs, the epistemologist is not only concerned with the quest for knowledge or sources of knowledge but also has an uphill task of rebuffing the skeptics by providing that which is certain, that is, incorrigible, incontrovertible, indubitable and foundational. Once the certainty is reached, we can then construct every other structure of knowledge on it thus, completing the edifice of knowledge in question.

The theory of justification in the foundationalist sense implies showing self-evident structure or base in which every part of our cognitive endowment can be constructed or derived. In this regard, the basic structure becomes non-inferential. By non-inferentiality, we mean the absence of any demonstration as a means of proving a belief and it is only basic beliefs as distinct from derived or inferred beliefs that can be described as non-inferential. In other words, the key idea of foundationalism presupposes that some propositions carry with them their own justification. Such propositions are called basic propositions because they do not need any support outside themselves for their certainty. They are axiomatic, not needing something else to make them true.

Besides basic knowledge there is the inferred or derived knowledge. The inferred or derived knowledge is not same with the type in logic. By inferred truth we mean truth that refers to its foundation. Doubting about any knowledge 'X' implies the lack of justification. For Chisholm, to justify such knowledge 'X', involves referring to what appears in experience. This implies that basic knowledge, which is foundational, is experiential while every other kind of knowledge (derived or inferred) is a superstructure on it. The basic is the end point of all evidential (inferred) propositions. Based on the asymmetrical relations between the basic and the inferred; knowledge has been traditionally defined as 'justified-true-belief. For the belief we hold as far as foundationalism is concerned cannot be given epistemic status except where it is justified by a basic belief which prima facie needs no further justification. Logically this implies that the basic belief precedes the derived or inferred knowledge and if that is the case, then the deductive approach to systematization affords the appropriate means of justification.

Jacob Joshua Ross (1970) discussed the doctrine of 'The Given' in sense experience as the foundation of knowledge; succinctly he described the notions of foundations as follows;

*all that the doctrine asserts is that our knowledge may be thought of as a structure which rests upon a sure foundation provided (at least in part) by what is given in sensation. There is thus a distinction between 'basic' or 'primitive' knowledge (which perhaps cannot strictly be called 'knowledge' at all) and 'derivative' or 'inferred knowledge, and the latter is, in some sense 'based upon' or 'presupposes' the former....The distinction between the 'basic knowledge' and inferred knowledge' arises only because the philosopher finds two sorts of truths which are known, the sort which when he asks himself 'what is the justification for my supposing I know this? He will answer by referring to something else that he knows, and the sort, which he finds when, in putting this same question repeatedly, he is unable to point to anything else which he knows and which would justify his claim to knowledge (19).*

In this connection, John Kekes (1977) notes that a proposition is justified completely; "in being certain of its truth, because there could be no difference between believing that the proposition is true and the proposition being true. The two come to one and the possibility of

error is removed"(88). Once the error is removed, basic propositions become incorrigible and justified. If we start with a secure foundation and admit to our system only beliefs certified by such reliable methods of reasoning such as deduction or induction, then the system will yield knowledge. The epistemological ideal of foundationalism is thus to begin an inquiry with an unassailable foundation. In other words, the non-inferential beliefs are taken as the secure foundations or structure whose justifications are not in any way attained by any relation to other beliefs, rather beliefs that are justified by their relation to other beliefs depend for their justification on the unassailable foundation.

### **2.1.1 The Infinite Regress Argument:**

It will be necessary at this juncture to analyze the mode of support, which the foundations of knowledge give to our inferred beliefs. The question that one may ask is, if the foundationalists are of the view that no unjustified beliefs can have epistemic status because such beliefs are vulnerable to skepticism which they tend to rebuff, can we at any point in time talk about a foundational belief? If the answer is in the affirmative, it seemingly becomes an illusion or a figment of imagination. Argumentatively, at every stage of our belief, one is expected by virtue of the tenets of foundationalist theory, to seek for a further justification. This means that even the basic structure cannot be attained without a justification, for knowledge itself has been conceived as a justified-true-belief.

If traditional definition of knowledge indicates that all beliefs must be justified so as to possess epistemic status, how come then, the foundationalists talk about basic beliefs without justification? Illustratively, the foundationalist holds that, for a belief "A" to be true it must be justified by "B" and for "B" to be true, "C" must justify it and for "C" to be true, "D" must justify it. This can lead to series of justification ad infinitum. In other words one can skeptically argue that such a sequence of justification can never end. Once it does arbitrarily, it renders all the previous beliefs in the sequence unjustified. The Skeptics argument against the foundationalist epistemic justification is that there is likely to be an infinite regress that denies the theory of any epistemic status. Accordingly, if this problem arises with every proposition in the sequence, how can the sequence ever end? Do we face the prospect that the pattern of dependency goes on forever? Whatever seems like the final piece of evidence will not really be final; new evidence is needed to justify the previous one (the one that seem final). In the end one may be trapped with a skeptical conclusion. For the Skeptics no such sequence ever ends.

Apparently if we take to the infinite regress argument as presented above, the foundationalist theory of justification would never present us with knowledge that we can rely on. This is for the simple reason that they can never arrive at a terminal point that may be taken as the final justification for all previous evidence. From the Skeptics' regress arguments; it would seem that the foundationalist theory of epistemic justification is a figment of imagination. Considering the traditional definition of knowledge as justified-true-belief, it will be gross absurdity and as mentioned earlier unepistemic to go seeking for a justification for all beliefs in the chain ad infinitum. Though Aristotle had remarked that it is the mark of a foolish man to demand a proof for everything, the regress argument is no doubt predicated on the idea that justification always calls for new beliefs making every stage of justification to be loose and doubtful. In this connection, the foundationalist will argue that not all justification is inferential too. Some is basic, non-inferential that is, foundational. In other words, some truths are justified non-inferentially. Not all justifiers need to be justified by further justifiers.

All we need do in justifying our beliefs is in Chisholm's conception to give necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. These sufficient conditions could be indubitable reasons. Once we are able to do this then, we conclusively present our belief as truly justified knowledge. A clear example here is the Cartesian foundation which provides all necessary

and sufficient conditions for the self-justifiable "Cogito" beyond which one cannot argue. Accordingly, Descartes may have thought that the cogito - 'I think therefore I am' could halt the skeptical infinite regress. He would claim that at the base of your attempts to know, either empirically or a priori, lays the cogito... No knowledge is more basic than this. The attempts in epistemic parlance have often been such that the necessary and sufficient conditions for one to know a proposition could be stated in a form similar to the one presented by Edmund L. Gettier (1967).

- a) S knows that P
- IFF (i) P is true
- (ii) S believes that P, and
- (iii) S is justified in believing that P.

In this connection, it follows that the following gives the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge

- (b) S knows that P
- IFF (I) S accepts P,
- (II) S has adequate evidence for P, and
- (III) P is true. (317)

Ayer (1969) has stated the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge as follows;

- (c) S knows that P
- IFF (I) P is true
- (II) S is sure that P is true, and
- S has the right to be sure that P is true.

Such could be the form of necessary and sufficient conditions, though, Gettier rejects the three examples a, b and c. for him the conditions, stated therein do not constitute the sufficient conditions for the veracity of the proposition 'S knows that P'. He conceived 'adequate evidence' and 'the right to be sure' as a synonym of 'is justified in believing that'. Gettier sees these conditions as insufficient because;

- 1) It is possible for a person (S) to be justified in believing a proposition (P) that is in fact false.
- 2) For any proposition (P), if S is justified in believing P, and P entails Q, and S deduces Q from P and accepts Q as a result of this deduction, then S is justified in believing Q.

In a nut-shell, the Gettier's problem against the foundationalist epistemic justification right from the time of Plato can be stated as;

- a) The traditional definition of knowledge as justified-true-belief is inadequate or does not have a sufficient condition for someone to know a given proposition.
- b) A belief can be justified with evidence without being true or our justification may be false and yet our knowledge is true.

One may observe here that Gettier's critique holds in such knowledge claims that are not based on conclusive evidence.

Fred Dretske (1981) had emphasized on the need for conclusive reasons. Conclusive reasons have a model as well as an epistemic character. What Dretske is pointing out is that, conclusive reasons cannot be possibly mistaken. This means that we are not basing our claims on mere testimony of a trusted friend, or basing our justification on a shaky foundation like one man-made instrument, which can disappoint. Our justification must not be based on a

game of chance. We are not also to base our justification on our own concocted good reason or conclusive reason; Gettier's argument therefore could be seen as one of those concocted arguments to destroy the traditional criteria of knowledge. From the foregoing, there is no doubt that what conclusive reason is for 'Mr. A' may not be for 'Mr. B': However, conclusive reason could be comprehended or understood in the absolute sense of it. K. Lehrer (1978: p. 40) presented a good example 'If X explains Y for P at t, then X justifies Y for P at t'. This can put to an end the regress argument of the skeptics.

### **2.1.2 The Circular Argument:**

The argument of circularity in justification may be used to attack the foundationalist who in order to avert or circumvent the infinite regress argument may conclude that a belief can be justified by several other beliefs where, the last in the series is justified by the initial belief. For Susan Haack (1993), this type of circular justification, is the picture of justification that the coherentist must be offering which obviously is epistemologically unsatisfactory (23). It does seem that a circular justification such as 'A' is justified by 'B', 'B' by 'C', 'C' by 'D', 'D' by 'E' and 'E' by 'A' obviously yields no knowledge. It becomes an argument of circularity where the initial belief 'A' lacking justification is given as evidence in support of the last belief 'E' also lacking justification. Here what is initially denied as knowledge because of the lack of justification is eventually used in appraising other evidence. This indicates that there is no terminal point of justification. This makes the argument to be porous or weak and at the same time none epistemic in the strong sense of it.

A belief justified either infinitely or in a circular form, is still loose until there is a final justification, which does not depend on any other belief besides itself. This cannot end a mere belief because at that particular time, attempts have been made for further justification yet none is found. Every effort seems to come to a halt as nothing can further be given for its justification. A belief apparently possesses epistemic status once it averts both infinite regress and circular justifications and depends on a foundation that is independently justified.

Bruce Aune (1981) describes the phrase 'intrinsically acceptable' as a belief whose truth is acceptable independent of any inference. This is a major feature of foundationalist justification. At this juncture there is no doubt that the theory of justification is of much relevance when the theory of foundationalism is examined. We have come to terms that there is an asymmetrical relation between the belief that is inferred and the foundation. The nature of this relationship is such that the belief is connected by means of evidence to the foundation (basic belief). This asymmetrical relation shows that though the belief is justified by the foundation, the foundation is not justified by the belief and in no way needs any external justification besides itself.

Thus, in order to allay doubt and get at certainty which gives epistemology its relevance, it is imperative to consciously make use of the theory of justification. Fundamentally, the Foundationalists have been able to justifiably prove that our beliefs have a secure foundation without which no belief can claim the status of knowledge. Once more, the nature of this foundation shall be epistemologically examined. For now we will consider another type of epistemic theory that relies on justification as a necessity in proving our knowledge claims.

### **3. The Coherentist Theory of Epistemic Justification.**

The Coherentist theory of justification is opposed to the theory of foundationalism. While we can describe the foundationalist relations as asymmetrical, we can as we shall see later, describe that of the Coherentist as symmetrical. According to the Coherentist approach to epistemic justification, a statement or theory is true not by inherent facts or mere derivation of another, but by its external conformity with the already established set of statements. Put in

another way, where a statement is in conflict with the already established set of statements that is, the body of statements that coheres with each other, then such a statement does not only contradicts itself but is also described as false. The moment such a statement or belief is false, it invariably increases the degree of coherence among the established set of statements with common characteristics. An example is where the statement 'E' is appraised or justified by the already established set of statements 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' which in a symmetrical order justifies one another. When 'E' fits into the set, then 'E' becomes justified coherently. But where 'E' does not fit into the already established set; it invariably increases in degree the coherence of the set. With regard to epistemic justification, the Coherentist holds that, a proposition is epistemologically justified if it is in agreement or coheres with the component parts of a set. This implies that, there has to be other statements that justify one another by virtue of the similarities both in content and features thereby, constituting an evaluative set of statements. This evaluative set of statements is used in justifying any other statement that fits in or coheres with the already established set. The coherence theory of justification can precisely be conceived as a holistic theory used in evaluating or justifying itself; and any other belief or statement thereby giving it epistemic status.

A belief set with reasonable coherence will make each of its members justified. This shows that under the coherence theory, Justification is a matter of both internal relation and external relation, a question of fit between objects that are of the same sort. In a more explicative manner, Jonathan Dancey (1991) states that: when we talk of the justification of 'A's belief that 'P', we are asking whether the proposition 'P' forms with other propositions which 'A' believes, a promising coherent set if it does. The truth of 'P' is explained by appeal to the truth of others (117).

Unlike the foundationalist account of epistemic justification, the Coherentist is of the view that; there are no fixed point by appeal to which other beliefs are assessed. Each belief is assessed in the same way, by considering the effect of its presence on the coherence of the whole. So there are no restrictions on what can be appealed to in support of what. The test is a system and not any one directional criterion of fitting the evidence. The justification is by appeal to the increase in coherence. Thus once a belief-set increases the size and span of coherence, it is said to be justified epistemologically.

Nagel Rescher (1973) suggests another advantage of epistemic coherence. For him, attention should be directed away from the individual struggle to construct his own epistemology, which is the classical conception of the epistemological enterprise; instead coherence gives a sense to the notion of knowledge as a social phenomenon, something that can be shared and which can increase by means of that sharing. Thus, the Coherentist rejects the existence of a sub-basement or structure of facts that are non-inferential or foundational and whose truth and certainty are obtained through direct and unmediated experience. For him all epistemic beliefs both empirical and a priori ultimately derive their warrant from their interrelationship or coherence with other established set of beliefs. From here, it can be argued that justification in the coherence sense is contextually dependent.

Arguing against the contextual claim one observes that; the difficulty to which the supposed context-dependence of justification gives rise is that whether or not something is an acceptable justification is determined by standards, which the attempted justification offered. Thus, for instance, the adequacy of a particular scientific justification depends on its conformity to standards of justification implicit in science. The conclusion seems unavoidable that if justification is context-dependent then it is unobtainable. This implies that justification in the sense of context-dependence as in coherence may be unnecessary. This could be because it is an internal response occurring within a system of belief having both the standards used in justifying the new belief and the standards themselves. The coherence justification unlike the foundational sense moves away from the egocentric predication to

thinking of itself as a collaborator in order to acquire its epistemic status. Put differently, coherentism aims to account for justification purely in terms of what is internal to a system of beliefs. As a system of beliefs it is not just any set per se, it must contain beliefs that support each other and thereby justifying each other. The Coherentist can therefore be described as more egalitarian. For the Coherentist, there are no basic beliefs and there is no basic knowledge.

Upon the Coherentist's simple approach to justifying our beliefs, there are epistemologists who do not agree with the approach. According to Lehrer (1974: 53), Richard Foley in his article "Chisholm and coherence" stated that the theory is epistemologically inadequate. What Foley is rather saying is that foundationalist theories of justification can be developed quite nicely without recourse to a principle of coherence and where they do, the principle of coherence only helps in completing the foundationalist's claims. In other words, Foley sees coherentism as an auxiliary to foundationalism. In line with this, Foley talks about Chisholm as having this particular conception; according to him, it needs to be emphasized that Chisholm like other foundationalists before him allows a relation of coherence to be important epistemologically only in those cases where the propositions comprising the coherent set have some warrant independent of coherence. That is, his theory is foundational in the sense that although it allows relations of coherence to raise the degree of warrant accruing to each member of a coherent set, the members of such a set must have some degree warrant deriving from foundational claims

Ernest Sosa in Stumpf, S. E. (1982) examines the Coherentist theory of justification and concludes that the theory is only a cosmetic and has complexities. According to Sosa one of the foundationalist; "... no matter how variegated coherence may be, the warrant of a belief cannot derive simply from its coherence within a homogeneous and unstructured body of beliefs (321). This suggests that members of the belief set ought to depend on some other structured beliefs for their justification. These structured beliefs could be incoherent but foundational at the beginning.

Besides Sosa's position and in clear opposition to the coherence theory of epistemic justification, C. I. Lewis flatly denies that all warrant-increasing properties are ultimately inferential. Thus, Roderick Firth's article in Herbert Feigl (1972) presents Lewis as one who discusses the problem of epistemic justification as problems concerning judgments and that only statements that reflect one's experience including sense experience, memory experience and concurrent feelings are certain. According to Lewis, their certainty is not derived directly or indirectly from their coherence with other statements rather from their experiential foundations. Lewis in this respect uses the words indubitable and incorrigible as synonyms of certainty (293-294).

The foundationalist may respond to the Coherentist that, at the beginning, the initial belief (the first) may not have been coherently justified before the construction of the belief-set. The question is what is the criterion for the justification of the very first belief? If there were no other beliefs of common features prior to the initial one, then such an initial belief could be justified not only foundationally but could also be taken to be the foundation of any other coherent belief. This is because it must have been self-evident or axiomatic in nature and as such the basic belief for all other coherent beliefs. For the first belief is used in evaluating the second and then other members of the set. We can from the foregoing conclude that even the Coherentist directly or indirectly justify beliefs especially the initial belief in a foundational sense since it is non-inferential. Thus, the sole dependence on relations among beliefs cannot be guaranteed at the beginning. There is a fundamental problem; in analogy, it is absurd suggesting that two drunken sailors could support each other by leaning back to back when neither was standing on anything. If neither sailor is standing on anything, he is bound to collapse like a building hanging on air without a foundation to support it. Therefore,

knowledge in this sense may not be exclusively a matter of relations among beliefs, as the Coherentist will want us to believe. The beliefs must have a foundation quite supportive for them to relate coherently well else they collapse. The foundation or basic belief must be considered non-inferentially by virtue of their intrinsic character and content which makes them epistemologically distinguished.

#### **4. The Theory of Foundherentism as an Epistemic Justification**

Susan Haack (1993) articulated a new theory of justification called Foundherentism, a product of the gap between foundationalism and coherentism. Haack suggested that both theories play complimentary roles especially in the area of epistemic justification. It will be recalled as an explication that foundationalism insist on the one-directionality justification of a belief which by implication denies that a basic belief could receive justification from the support of a non-basic belief. On the contrary, coherentism allows for a pervasive justification, of mutual support, that is, the symmetrical type. In this respect Haack is of the view that both traditional theories do not exhaust the options hence, there is a logical space between foundationalism and coherentism having empirical and a priori orientations respectively.

Haack (1993) argues that foundherentism, allows the relevance of experience to justification but unlike foundationalism, foundherentism is a theory "which requires no class of privileged beliefs justified exclusively by experience with no support from other beliefs" (19). The privileged belief with exclusive experience and independence so referred to here is the basic belief as conceived by the foundationalist. The theory of justification described above is for Haack neither Foundationalist nor Coherentist, but is an intermediate between the traditional rivals. She precisely explicates foundherentism in the following manner; a subject's experience is relevant to the justification of his empirical beliefs, but there need be no privileged class of empirical beliefs justified exclusively by the support of experience, independently of the support of other beliefs. Furthermore, Susan Haack states that justification is not exclusively a one-directional theory but rather entails pervasive relations predicated on mutual support.

This in my opinion suggest that Haack may have followed the footsteps of Immanuel Kant the German Philosopher who tried to reconcile empiricism and rationalism). Putatively, foundationalism has an empirical orientation while coherentism has a rationalistic orientation and a reconciliation of both theories of epistemic justification by means of the complimentary roles they play as pointed out by Haack leads to the formulation of the theory of Foundherentism.

Suffice it to say that the theory of foundherentism has not solved the problem of justification completely. For the traditional argument against Kant's attempt to reconcile two distinct theories of knowledge empiricism and rationalism with different sources can be directed against Haack's theory. She may argue that the foundherentism is born out of the difference between foundationalism and coherentism; it is what its tenets are that matters.

#### **5. Summary and Conclusion**

However, we shall draw a conclusion for this very chapter on the theory of justification; that knowledge for all the various theories falls within a dimension of assessment or evaluation for which we have no better label than (cognitive) justification. Thus the justification of a belief may perhaps supervene on its basis in perception, memory or inference. What the justification of a belief is founded on, or supervenes upon is exactly what the various theorists or epistemologists disagree about. But central to their arguments is the search for an end point that is indeed founded on something and takes the task of developing a theory of such foundations. For now, it is of importance to note that as far epistemic

justification is concerned, foundations are indispensable if our epistemic claims are to be relevant and reliable. It is the desire to reach at certainty that leads to the search for the foundations, which of course one might build upon as a framework beyond which we cannot go. We cannot embark on an explanation that has no end at least contextually. The string must be knotted somewhere to indicate an end or a limit. Where there is no end, the search may appear not only adventitious but aimless. The presupposed or imposed end becomes the basic ground of explanation or the substructure of the superstructure just like the architectural foundation of a building

Without a foundation, a theory might appear dangerously inexplicit and this might create room for a regressive justification of our epistemic claims. Accordingly, without foundational epistemology, there will be a vacuum which needs to be filled. Furthermore, if we deny that there are foundations to serve as common ground for adjudicating knowledge claims, the notion of the philosopher as guardian of rationality seems endangered. Perhaps this is a response to the position that philosophical arguments have no foundations hence are open-ended always.

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