

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE STRUCTURE OF JUSTIFICATION

7.1 Introductory Discourse

Epistemologists believe that there is no isolated knowledge. Knowing something requires knowing other things. Anyone who knows anything knows other things, for our knowledge forms a body – and that body has a structure. But what is this structure? Epistemologists generally tend to regard the structure of our knowledge as deriving from that of our justification. This conclusion can only become clearer as we examine some epistemological accounts of justification.

7.2 Foundationalism

According to this theory, our justified beliefs are structured like a building: they are divided into a foundation and a superstructure, the later resting upon the former. Beliefs belonging to the foundation are *nonbasic* and receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation. Before we evaluate this foundationalist account of justification, let us first try to spell it out more precisely.

What is it for a justified belief to be basic? According to one account, what makes a justified belief basic is that it does not receive its justification from any other beliefs. The following definition captures this thought.

7.2.1 Doxastic Basicity (DB)

S's justified belief that p is basic if and only if S's belief that p is justified without owing its justification to any of S's other beliefs.

Let us consider what would qualify as an example of a basic belief according to this definition. Suppose you notice someone's cap and you also notice that that cap looks blue to you. So you believe:

*(B) It appears to me that that cap is blue.

The above (B) is an example of a justified belief. Doxastic basicity tells us that (B) is basic if and only if it does not owe its justification to any other beliefs of yours. Therefore, if (B) is indeed basic, there must be some item or other to which (B) owes its justification, but that item will not be another belief of yours. We call this kind of basicity "doxastic" because it makes basicity a function of how our doxastic system (our belief system) is structured.

7.2.2 Kinds of Foundationalism

Let us now turn to the question of where the justification that attaches to (B) might come from, if we think of basicity, as defined by doxastic basicity. Note that doxastic basicity merely tells us that (B) is justified. It does not tell us how precisely (B) is justified. So it does not answer that question. What we need in addition to it, is an account of what it is that justifies a belief such as (B).

7.2.3 Privilege Foundationalism

According to one strand of foundationalist thought (which we call privilege foundationalism), (B) is justified because it cannot be false, doubted, or corrected by others. On such a view, (B) is justified because it carries with itself an *epistemic privilege* such as infallibility, indubitability and incorrigibility (cf. Alston, 1989). Note that (B) is a belief about how the cap appears to you. So (B) is a belief about a perceptual experience of yours. According to this strand of foundationalism, the basic beliefs of a subject are introspective beliefs about his/her own mental states, of which perceptual experiences make up one subset. Other mental states about which a subject can have basic beliefs may include such things as having a headache, being tired, feeling happy, etc. Beliefs about external objects cannot qualify as basic, according to this kind of foundationalism, because it is impossible for such beliefs to enjoy the kind of epistemic privileges necessary for being basic.

7.2.4 Experiential Foundationalism

According to a different strand of foundationalism (which we call experiential foundationalism), (B) is justified by some further mental state of yours, but not by a further belief of yours. Indeed, (B) is justified by the very perceptual experience that (B) itself is about, namely the cap's looking blue to you. Let (E) represent that experience. According to this alternative view, (B) and (E) are distinct mental states. The idea is that what justifies (B) is (E). Since (E) is an experience, not a belief of yours, (B) can, according to doxastic basicity, still be basic.

7.2.5 Privilege vs. Experiential

Privilege foundationalism is generally thought to restrict basic beliefs so that beliefs about contingent, mid-independent facts cannot be basic, since beliefs about such facts are generally thought to lack the privilege that attends our introspective beliefs about our own present mental states, or our beliefs *a priori* necessities. Experiential foundationalism is not restrictive in the same way. Suppose instead of (B), you believe (H):

(H) That cap is blue.

Unlike B, (H) is about the cap itself, and not the way the cap appears to you. Such a belief is not one about which we are infallible or otherwise epistemically privileged. Privilege foundationalism would, therefore, classify (H) as nonbasic. However, it is quite plausible to think that E justifies not only (B) but (H) as well. If (E) indeed is what justifies (H), and (H) does not receive any

additional justification from further beliefs of yours, the (H) qualifies, according to doxastic basicity, as basic.

Experiential foundationalism, thus, combines two crucial ideas:

- (i) when a justified belief is basic, its justification is not owed to any other belief;
- (ii) what in fact justifies basic beliefs are experiences.

Under normal circumstances, perceptual beliefs such as (H) are not based on any further beliefs about one's own perceptual experience. It is not clear, therefore, how privilege foundationalism can account for the justification of ordinary perceptual beliefs like (H).¹⁰¹

Experiential foundationalism, on the other hand, has no difficulty explaining how ordinary perceptual beliefs are justified. According to this theory, they are justified by the perceptual experiences that give rise to them. This could be the reason why more preference has been given to experiential foundationalism by some philosophers. So far, we have articulated one conception of basicity, namely doxastic basicity. Below is an alternative conception.

7.2.6 Epistemic Basicity (EB)

*S's justified belief that p is basic if and only if S's justification for believing that p does not depend on any justification S possesses for believing a further proposition, q.*¹⁰²

From this, it is clear that epistemic basicity makes it more difficult for a belief to be basic than doxastic basicity does. To throw more light, we turn to the main question (let us call it the J-question) that advocates of experiential foundationalism.

7.2.7 The J-Question: EB vs. DB

Why are perceptual experiences a source of justification?

One way of answering the J-question is as follows: perceptual experiences are a source of justification only when, and only because, we have justification for taking them to be reliable.¹⁰³ Note that your having justification for believing that p does not entail that you actually believe p. thus, your having justification for attributing reliability to your perceptual experiences does not entail that you actually believe them to be reliable.

What then might give us justification for thinking that our perceptual experiences are reliable? That is a complicated issue. For the purpose of this book, let us consider the following answer:

¹⁰¹ See R.A. Fumerton, *Metaepistemology and Skepticism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), for an effort to clarify this

¹⁰² Cf. M. Huemer, *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 33-34.

¹⁰³ See S. Cohen, "Basic Knowledge and the Problem of Easy Knowledge", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65(2), (2002), 309-329, for an article advocating compromise positions

we remember that they have served us well in the past. We are supposing, then, that justification for attributing reliability to your perceptual experiences consists of memories of perceptual success. On this view, a perceptual experience (E) justifies a perceptual belief only when, and only because, you have suitable track-record memories that give you justification for considering (E) reliable. Of course this raises the question why those memories give you justification, but there are many different approaches to this question, as we will see more fully.

If the above view is correct, then it is clear how doxastic basicity and epistemic basicity differ. Your having justification for (H) depends on your having justification for believing something else in addition to (H), namely that your visual experiences are reliable. As a result, (H) is not basic in the sense defined by epistemic basicity. However, (H) might still be basic in the sense defined by doxastic basicity. If you are justified in believing (H) and your justification is owed solely to (E) and (say, M), neither of which includes any beliefs, then your belief is doxastical, though not epistemically, basic

7.2.8 Other Possible answers

We have considered one possibility of answering the J-question, and considered how epistemic basicity and doxastic basicity differ, if that answer is correct. But there are other possible answers to the J-question. Another answer is that perceptual experiences are a source of justification when, and because, they are of types that reliably produce true belief. Another answer is that perceptual experiences are a source of justification when, and because, they are of types that reliably indicate the truth of their content. Yet another answer is that perceptual experiences are a source of justification when, and because, they have a certain phenomenology, namely that of presenting their content as true. It follows from this internalist answer that your perceptual experiences are a source of justification for you even if they are systematically unreliable concerning the truth of their content.

7.3 Transfer of Justification

Finally, let us briefly consider how justification is supposed to be transferred from basic to non-basic beliefs. There are two options: the justificatory relation between basic and non-basic beliefs could be deductive or non-deductive. If we take the relation to be deductive, each of one's non-basic beliefs would have to be such that it can be deduced from one's basic belief. But if we consider a random selection of typical beliefs we hold, it is difficult to see from which basic belief they could be deduced.

Foundationalists, therefore, typically conceive of the link between the foundation and the superstructure in non-deductive terms. They would say that, for a given set of basic beliefs, B, to justify a nonbasic belief, B*, it is not necessary that B entails B*. Instead, it is sufficient that, the inference from B to B* is a rational one – however such rationality is to be understood.

7.4 Coherentism

Foundationalism says that knowledge and justification are structured like a building, consisting of a superstructure that rests upon a foundation. According to coherentism, this simile gets things wrong. Knowledge and justification are structured like a web where the strength of any given area depends on the strength of the surrounding areas. Coherentists, then, deny that there are any basic beliefs. As we have already seen, there are two different ways of conceiving of basicity. Consequently, there are two corresponding ways of constructing coherentism: as the denial of doxastic basicity or as the denial of epistemic basicity. Let us first consider coherentism as the denial of doxastic basicity.

7.4.1 Doxastic Coherentism

Every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic neighborhood.

Let us apply this thought to the cap example we considered above. Suppose again you notice someone's cap and believe:

(H) That hat is blue.

Let us suppose that (H) is justified. According to coherentism, (H) receives its justification from other beliefs in the epistemic vicinity of (H). They constitute your evidence or your reason for taking (H) to be true. Which beliefs might make up this set of neighborhood beliefs? We will consider two approaches to answering this question. The first is known as *inference to the best explanation*. Such inferences generate what is called explanatory coherence.¹⁰⁴ According to this approach, we must suppose that you form a belief about the way the cap appears to you in your perceptual experiences, and a second belief to the effect that your perceptual experience, the cap's looking blue to you, is best explained by the hypothesis that (H) is true. Hence, the relevant set of beliefs is the following:

- (1) I am having a visual experience (E): the cap looks blue to me.
- (2) My having (E) is best explained by assuming that (H) is true.

There are of course alternative explanations of why you have (E). Perhaps you are hallucinating that the cap is blue. Perhaps an evil demon makes that cap look blue to you when in fact it is red. Perhaps you are the sort of person to whom caps always look blue. An explanatory coherentist would say that, compared with these, the cap's actual blueness is a superior explanation. That is why you are justified in believing (H). Note that an explanatory coherentist can also explain the lack of justification. Suppose that you remember that you just took a hallucinatory drug that makes things blue to you. That would prevent you from being justified in believing (H). The explanatory coherentist can account for this by pointing out that, in the case under consideration, the truth of (H) would not be the best explanation of why you are having experience (E). Rather,

¹⁰⁴ G. Harman, *Change in View: Principles of Reasoning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 2.

your having taking the hallucinatory drug would explain your have (E) at least as the hypothesis (H) would explain it. That is why, according to the explanatory coherentist, you are not justified in believing (H).

One challenge for explanatory coherentist is to explain what makes one explanation better than another. Let us use the evil demon hypothesis to illustrate this challenge. What we need is an explanation of why you are having (E). According to the evil demon hypothesis, you are having (E) because the evil demon is causing you to have it, in order to trick you. The explanatory coherentist would say that, if the bulk of our beliefs about the mind-independent world are justified, then this “evil demon” hypothesis is a bad explanation of why you are having (E). But why is it bad? What we need to answer in this question is a general and principled account of what makes one explanation better than another. Suppose we appeal to the fact that you are not *justified* in believing in the existence of evil demons. The general idea would be this: If there are two competing explanations, E1 and E2, and E1 consists of or includes a proposition that you are not justified in believing whereas E2 does not, then E2 is better than E1. The problem with this idea is that it puts the cart before the horse.

Explanatory coherentism is supposed to help us understand what it is for beliefs to be justified. It does not do that if it accounts for the difference between better and worse explanations by making use of the difference between justified and unjustified belief. If explanatory coherentism were to proceed in this way, it would be a circular, and thus uninformative, account of justification. So the challenge that explanatory coherentism must meet is to give an account, without using the concept of justification, of what makes one explanation better than another.

7.4.2 Reliability Coherentism: Let us move on to the second way in which the coherentist approach might be carried out. Recall what a subject’s justification for believing *p* is all about: *possessing a link between the belief that p and the truth of p*. Suppose the subject knows that the origin of her belief that *p* is reliable. So she knows that beliefs coming from this source tend to be true. Such knowledge would give her an excellent link between the belief and its truth. So we might say that the neighborhood beliefs which confer justification on (H) are the following:

- (1) I am having a visual experience (E): the cap looks blue to me.
- (3) Experiences like (E) are reliable.

Call coherentism of this kind *reliability coherentism*. If you believe (1) and (3), you are in possession of a good reason for thinking that the cap is indeed blue. So you are in possession of a good reason for thinking that the belief in question, (H), is true. That’s why, according to reliability coherentism, you are justified in believing (H).

Like explanatory coherentism, this view faces a circularity problem. If (H) receives its justification in part because you also believe (3), then, (3) itself must be justified. But where would your justification for (3) come from? One answer would be: from your memory of perceptual success in the past. You remember that your visual experiences have had a good track

record. They have rarely led you astray. The problem is that you cannot justifiably attribute a good track record to your perceptual faculties without using your perceptual faculties. So, if reliability coherentism is going to work, it would have to be legitimate to use a faculty for the very purpose of establishing the reliability of that faculty itself. But it is not clear that this is legitimate.

Thus Richard Fumerton says the following, in the context of employing circular reasoning for the purpose of rebutting skepticism:

You cannot use perception to justify the reliability of perception! You cannot use memory to justify the reliability of memory! You cannot use induction to justify the reliability of induction! Such attempts to respond to skeptic's concerns involve blatant, indeed pathetic, circularity.¹⁰⁵

We have seen that explanatory coherentism and reliability coherentism each face its own distinctive circularity problem. Since both are versions of *doxastic* coherentism, they both face a further difficulty: Do people, under normal circumstances, really form beliefs like (1), (2), and (3)? It would seem they do not. It could be objected, therefore, that these two versions of coherentism make excessive intellectual demands of ordinary subjects who are unlikely to have the background beliefs that, according to these versions of coherentism, are needed for justification. This objection could be avoided by stripping coherentism of its doxastic element. The result would be the following version of coherentism, which results from the rejection of epistemic basicity (the epistemic conception of basicity).

7.4.3 Dependence Coherentism: Whenever one is justified in believing a proposition p_1 , one's justification for believing p_1 depends on justification one has for believing some further propositions, $p_1, p_2, \dots p_n$.

An explanatory coherentist might say that, for you to be justified in believing (H), it is not necessary that you actually *believe* (1) and (2). However, it is necessary that you have *justification* for believing (1) and (2). It is your having justification for (1) and (2) that gives you justification for believing (H). A reliability coherentist might make an analogous point. He might say that, to be justified in believing (H), you need not believe anything about the reliability of the origin of your belief. You must, however, have justification for believing that the origin of your belief is reliable; that is, you must have justification for (1) and (3). Both versions of dependence coherentism, then, rest on the supposition that it is possible to have justification for a proposition without actually believing that proposition.

Dependence coherentism is a significant departure from the way coherentism has typically been construed by its advocates. According to the typical construal of coherentism, a belief is

¹⁰⁵ R.A. Fumerton, *Metaepistemology and Skepticism*, 177.

justified, only if the subject has certain further *beliefs* that constitute reasons for the given belief. Dependence coherentism rejects this. According to it, justification need not come in the form of beliefs. It can come in the form of introspective and memorial experience, so long as such experience gives a subject justification for beliefs about either reliability or explanatory coherence. In fact, dependence coherentism allows for the possibility that a belief is justified, not by receiving *any* of its justification from other beliefs, but solely by suitable perceptual experiences and memory experience.¹⁰⁶

Next, let us examine some of the reasons provided in the debate over foundationalism and coherentism.

7.5 Why Foundationalism?

7.5.1 The Regress Argument

The regress problem (also known as Agrippa's Trilemma) is the problem of providing a complete logical foundation for human knowledge. The traditional way of supporting a rational argument is to appeal to other rational arguments, typically using chains of reason and rules of logic. A classic example that goes back to Aristotle is deducing that *Socrates is mortal*. We have a logical rule that says *All humans are mortal* and an assertion that *Socrates is human* and we deduce that *Socrates is mortal*. In this example how do we know that Socrates is human? Presumably we apply other rules such as: *All born from human females are human*. Which then leaves open the question how do we know that all born from humans are human? This is the regress problem: how can we eventually terminate a logical argument with some statements that do not require further justification but can still be considered rational and justified? As John Pollock stated:

...to justify a belief one must appeal to a further justified belief. This means that one of two things can be the case. Either there are some beliefs that we can be justified for holding, without being able to justify them on the basis of any other belief, or else for each justified belief there is an infinite regress of (potential) justification [the nebula theory]. On this theory there is no rock bottom of justification. Justification just meanders in and out through our network of beliefs, stopping nowhere.¹⁰⁷

The apparent impossibility of completing an infinite chain of reasoning is thought by some to support skepticism. It is also the impetus for Descartes' famous dictum: *I think, therefore I am*.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. S. Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 21.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Peter Klein, "Skepticism," in Zalta, Edward N. (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015). Retrieved 30 October, 2021.

Descartes was looking for some logical statement that could be true without appeal to other statements.

Now, the main argument for foundationalism is called the *regress argument*. It is an argument from elimination. With regard to every justified belief, B_1 , the question arises where does the justification of B_1 come from. If B_1 is not basic, it would have to come from another belief, B_2 . But B_2 can justify B_1 only if B_2 is justified itself. If B_2 is basic, the justificatory chain would end with B_2 . But if B_2 is not basic, we need a further belief, B_3 . If B_3 is not basic, we need a fourth belief, and so forth. Unless the ensuing regress terminates in a basic belief, we get two possibilities: the regress will either return *back* to B_1 or continue *ad infinitum*. According to the regress argument, both of these possibilities are unacceptable. Therefore, if there are justified beliefs, there must be basic beliefs.

Steup noted that this argument suffers from various weaknesses.¹⁰⁸ First, we may wonder whether the alternatives to foundationalism are really unacceptable. In the recent literature on this subject, we actually find an elaborate defense of the position that infinitism is the correct solution to the regress problem. Nor should circularity be dismissed too quickly. The issue is not whether a simple argument of the form *p therefore p* can justify the belief that *p*. Of course it cannot. Rather, the issue is ultimately whether, in the attempt to show that trust in our faculties is reasonable, we may make use of the input our faculties deliver. Whether such circularity is as unacceptable as a *p-therefore-p* inference is an open question.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, the avoidance of circularity does not come cheap. Experiential foundationalists claim that perception is a source of justification. Hence they need to answer the J-question: *Why* is perception a source of justification? As we saw above, if we wish to answer this question without committing ourselves to the kind of circularity dependence coherentism involves, we must choose between externalism and an appeal to brute necessity.

The second weakness of the regress argument is that its conclusion merely says this: If there are justified beliefs, there must be justified beliefs that do not receive their justification from other beliefs. Its conclusion does not say that, if there are justified beliefs, there must be beliefs whose justification is independent of any justification for further beliefs. So the regress argument, if it were sound, would merely show that there must be *doxastic* basicity. Dependence coherentism, however, allows for doxastic basicity. So the regress argument merely defends experiential foundationalism against doxastic coherentism. It does not tell us why we should prefer experiential foundationalism to dependence coherentism.

Experiential foundationalism can be supported by citing cases like the blue cap example. Such examples make it plausible to assume that perceptual experiences are a source of justification. But they do not arbitrate between dependence coherentism and experiential foundationalism,

¹⁰⁸ M. Steup and Ram Nata, "Epistemology."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

since both of those views appeal to perceptual experiences to explain why perceptual beliefs are justified.

Lastly, foundationalism can be supported by advancing objections to coherentism. One prominent objection is that coherentism somehow fails to ensure that a justified belief system is in contact with reality. This objection derives its force from the fact that fiction can be perfectly coherent. Why think, therefore, that the coherence of a belief system is a reason for thinking that the beliefs in that system tend to be true? Coherentists could respond to this objection by saying that, if a belief system contains beliefs such as “Many of my beliefs have their origin in perceptual experiences” and “My perceptual experiences are reliable”, it is reasonable for the subject to think that his belief system brings her into contact with external reality.

This looks like an effective response to the no-contact-with-reality objection. Moreover, it is not easy to see why foundationalism itself should be better positioned than coherentism when contact with reality is the issue. What is meant by “ensuring” contact with reality? If foundationalists expect a *logical guarantee* of such contact, basic beliefs must be infallible. That would make contact with reality a rather expensive commodity. Given its price, foundationalists might want to lower their expectations. According to an alternative construal, we expect merely the *likelihood* of contact with reality. But if coherentists account for the epistemic value of perception in any way, then they can meet that expectation as well as foundationalists can.

Since coherentism can be construed in different ways, it is unlikely that there is one single objection that succeeds in refuting all possible versions of coherentism. Doxastic coherentism, however, seems particularly vulnerable to criticism coming from the foundationalist camp. We have already considered one of these: It would seem that doxastic coherentism makes excessive intellectual demands on believers. When dealing with the mundane tasks of everyday life, we do not normally bother to form beliefs about the explanatory coherence of our beliefs or the reliability of our belief sources.

According to a second objection, doxastic coherentism fails by being insensitive to the epistemic relevance of perceptual experiences. Foundationalists could argue as follows. Suppose you are observing a chameleon that rapidly changes its colors. A moment ago it was blue, now it is purple. You still believe it is blue. Your belief is now unjustified because you believe the chameleon is blue even though it *looks* purple to you. Then the chameleon changes its color back to blue. Now your belief that the chameleon is blue is justified again because the chameleon once again *looks* blue to you. The point would be that what is responsible for the changing justificatory status of your belief is solely the way the chameleon looks to you. Since doxastic coherentism does not attribute epistemic relevance to perceptual experiences by themselves, it cannot explain why your belief is first justified, then unjustified, and eventually justified again.

Doxastic coherentism might reply that, when the chameleon changes its color to purple, you form the belief that the chameleon looks purple to you. Because of this belief, you will not be justified in still believing that the chameleon is blue. Therefore, doxastic coherentism can explain

after all why your belief (the chameleon is blue) is unjustified after the chameleon changed its color to purple. The problem with this reply is that foundationalists are free to describe the example in whatever way they want (as long as it remains conceivable).¹¹⁰ And obviously, they would want to describe it by stipulating that you do not form any beliefs about how the chameleon appears to you. In response to that, doxastic coherentists could say that your failing to form beliefs about how the chameleon appears to you is inconceivable. That claim, however, does not recommend itself as a plausible one.

7.5.2 Infitism

An alternative resolution to the regress problem is known as infinitism. Infinitists take the infinite series to be merely potential, in the sense that an individual may have indefinitely many reasons available to them, without having consciously thought through all of these reasons when the need arises. This position is motivated in part by the desire to avoid what is seen as the arbitrariness and circularity of its chief competitors, foundationalism and coherentism. The most prominent defense of infinitism has been given by Peter Klein.¹¹¹

7.6 Why Coherentism?

Coherentism is typically defended by attacking foundationalism as a viable alternative. To argue against privilege foundationalism, coherentists pick an epistemic privilege they think is essential to foundationalism, and then argue that either no beliefs, or too few beliefs, enjoy such a privilege. Against experiential foundationalism, different objections have been advanced. One line of criticism is that perceptual experiences do not have propositional content. Therefore, the relation between a perceptual belief and the perceptual experience that gives rise to it can only be causal. But it is not clear that this is correct. When you see the cap and it looks blue to you, does your visual experience—its looking blue to you—not have the propositional content *that the cap is blue*? If it does, then why not allow that your perceptual experience can play a justificatory role?

Another line of thought is that, if perceptual experiences have propositional content, they cannot stop the justificatory regress because they would then be in need of justification themselves. That, however, is a strange thought. In our actual epistemic practice, we never demand of others to justify the way things appear to them in their perceptual experiences. Indeed, such a demand would seem absurd. Suppose I ask you: “Why do you think that the cap is blue?” You answer: “Because it looks blue to me”. There are sensible further questions I might ask at that point. For instance, I might ask: “Why do you think its looking blue to you gives you a reason for believing it is blue?” Or I might ask: “Could you not be mistaken in believing it looks blue to you?” But now suppose I ask you: “Why do you suppose the perceptual experience in which the cap looks blue to you is justified?” In response to that question, you should accuse me of misusing the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Peter D. Klein and John Turri, “Infinitism in Epistemology,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 30 October, 2021.

word “justification”. I might as well ask you what it is that justifies your headache when you have one, or what justifies the itch in your nose when you have one. The latter questions, you should reply, would be as absurd as my request for stating a justifying reason for your perceptual experience.¹¹²

Experiential foundationalism, then, is not easily dislodged. On what grounds could coherentists object to it? To raise problems for experiential foundationalism, coherentists could press the J-question: Why are perceptual experiences a source of justification? If foundationalists answer the J-question appealing to evidence that warrants the attribution of reliability to perceptual experiences, experiential foundationalism morphs into dependence coherentism. To avoid this outcome, foundationalists would have to give an alternative answer. One way of doing this would be to adopt the epistemic conception of basicity, and view it as a matter of necessity that perception is a source of justification. It remains to be seen whether such a view is sustainable.

7.7 Foundherentism

An intermediate position, known as foundherentism, is advanced by Susan Haack. Foundherentism is meant to unify foundationalism and coherentism. Haack explains the view by using a crossword puzzle as an analogy. Whereas, for example, infinitists regard the regress of reasons as taking the form of a single line that continues indefinitely, Haack has argued that chains of properly justified beliefs look more like a crossword puzzle, with various different lines mutually supporting each other.¹¹³ Thus, Haack’s view leaves room for both chains of beliefs that are vertical (terminating in foundational beliefs) and chains that are horizontal (deriving their justification from coherence with beliefs that are also members of foundationalist chains of belief).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Nigel Warburton, *Thinking from A to Z*, 44.