TWO TYPES OF FOUNDATIONALISM

FOUNDATIONALISM is often stated as the doctrine that knowledge constitutes a structure the foundations of which support all the rest but themselves need no support. To make this less metaphorical we need to specify the mode of support involved. In contemporary discussions of foundationalism 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 a belief.[1] The sense in which a foundation needs no support is that it is not justified by its relation to other justified beliefs; in that sense it does not "rest on" on other beliefs. Thus we may formulate foundationalism as follows:

  I. 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.

Notice that nothing is said about *knowledge* in this formulation. Since the structure alleged by foundationalism is a structure of the justification of belief, the doctrine can be stated in terms of that component of knowledge alone. Indeed, one who thinks that knowledge has nothing to do with justified belief is still faced with the question of whether foundationalism is a correct view about the structure of epistemic justification.

   Two emendations will render this formulation more perspicuous. First, a useful bit of terminology. Where what justifies a belief in-

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[1] Contemporary writers on foundationalism do not seem to notice that Descartes and Locke have a quite different view of knowledge and, hence, that, if they hold that knowledge rests on foundations, this will mean something rather different. See below, p. 181, for a translation of a bit of Descartes into current foundationalist idiom.

cludes [2] the believer's having certain other justified beliefs, so re-
lated to the first belief as to embody reasons or grounds for it, we
may speak of *indirectly (mediately) justified belief*. And, where
what justifies a belief does not include any such constituent, we
may speak of *directly (immediately) justified belief*. Correspond-
ingly, a case of knowledge in which the justification requirement is
satisfied by indirect (mediate) justification will be called *indirect
(mediate) knowledge*; and a case in which the justification require-
ment is satisfied by direct (immediate) justification will be called
direct (immediate) knowledge.

Second, we should make more explicit how mediate justification
is thought to rest on immediately justified belief. The idea is that,
although the other beliefs involved in the mediate justification of a
given belief may themselves be mediately justified, if we continue
determining at each stage how the supporting beliefs are justified,
we will arrive, sooner or later, at directly justified beliefs. This
will not, in general, be a single line of descent; typically the belief
with which we start will rest on several beliefs, each of which in
turn will rest on several beliefs. So the general picture is that of
multiple branching from the original belief.

With this background we may reformulate foundationalism as fol-
lows (turning the "foundation" metaphor on its head):

II. Every mediately justified belief stands at the origin of a (more or
less) multiply branching tree structure at the tip of each branch
of which is an immediately justified belief.

II can be read as purely hypothetical (*if* there are any mediately
justified beliefs, then ...) or with existential import (There are
mediately justified beliefs, and ...). Foundationalists typically make
the latter claim, and I shall understand the doctrine to carry existen-
tial import.

II can usefully be divided into two claims:

(A) There are directly justified beliefs.

(B) A given person has a stock of directly justified beliefs sufficient to
generate chains of justification that terminate in whatever indi-
rectly justified beliefs he has.

In other words, (A) there are foundations, and (B) they suffice to
hold up the building.

[2] Only 'includes', because other requirements are also commonly imposed for
mediate justification, e.g., that the first belief be "based" on the others, and,
by some epistemologists, that the believer realize that the other beliefs do
constitute adequate grounds for the first.

In this paper we shall restrict our attention to A. More specifically, we shall be concerned with a certain issue over what it takes for a belief to serve as a foundation.

I. THE SECOND-LEVEL ARGUMENT

Let's approach this issue by confronting foundationalism with a certain criticism, a recent version of which can be found in Bruce Aune.[3]

The line of reasoning behind the empiricist's assumption is, again, that while intra-language rules may validly take us from premise to conclusion, they cannot themselves establish empirical truth. If the premises you start with are false, you will have no guarantee that the conclusions you reach are not false either. Hence, to attain knowledge of the actual world, you must ultimately have premises whose truth is acceptable independently of any inference and whose status is accordingly indubitable. Only by having such premises can you gain a starting point that would make inference worthwhile. For convenience, these indispensable basic premises may be called "intrinsically acceptable." The possibility of empirical knowledge may then be said to depend on the availability of intrinsically acceptable premises.

If this line of thought is sound, it follows that utter scepticism can be ruled out only if one can locate basic empirical premises that are intrinsically acceptable. Although philosophers who attack scepticism in accordance with this approach generally think they are defending common sense, it is crucial to observe that they cannot actually be doing so. The reason for this is that, from the point of view of common experience, there is no plausibility at all in the idea that intrinsically acceptable premises, as so defined, ever exist. Philosophers defending such premises fail to see this because they always ignore the complexity of the situation in which an empirical claim is evaluated.

I have already given arguments to show that introspective claims are not, in themselves, intrinsically infallible, they may be regarded as virtually certain if produced by a reliable (sane, clear-headed) observer, but their truth is not a consequence of the mere fact that they are confidently made. To establish a similar conclusion regarding the observation claims of everyday life only the sketchiest arguments are needed. Obviously the mere fact that such a claim is made does not assure us of its truth. If we know that the observer is reliable, made his observation in good light, was reasonably close to the object, and so on, then we may immediately regard it as acceptable. But its acceptability is not intrinsic to the claim itself ... I would venture to say that any spontaneous claim, observational or introspective, carries almost no presumption of truth, when considered entirely by itself. If

3 *Knowledge, Mind and Nature* (New York: Random House, 1967).

we accept such a claim as true, it is only because of our confidence that a complex body of background assumptions—concerning observers, standing conditions, the kind of object in question—and, often, a complex mass of further observations all point to the conclusion that it is true.

   Given these prosaic considerations, it is not necessary to cite experimental evidence illustrating the delusions easily brought about by, for example, hypnosis to see that no spontaneous claim is acceptable wholly on its own merits. On the contrary, common experience is entirely adequate to show that clear-headed men never accept a claim merely because it is made, without regard to the peculiarities of the agent and of the conditions under which it is produced. For such men, the acceptability of every claim is always determined by inference. If we are prepared to take these standards of acceptability seriously, we must accordingly admit that the traditional search for intrinsically acceptable empirical premises is completely misguided (41–43).

Now the target of Aune's critique differs in several important respects from the foundationalism defined above. First and most obviously, Aune supposes that any "intrinsically acceptable premises" will be infallible and indubitable, and some of his arguments are directed specifically against these features.[4] Second, there is an ambiguity in the term 'intrinsically acceptable'. Aune introduces it to mean "whose truth is acceptable independently of any inference," this looks roughly equivalent to our 'directly justified'. However in arguing against the supposition that the "observation claims of everyday" are intrinsically acceptable, he says that "the mere fact that such a claim is made does not assure us of its truth," thereby implying that to be intrinsically acceptable a claim would have to be justified just by virtue of being made. Now it is clear that a belief (claim) of which this is true is directly justified, but the converse does not hold. A perceptual belief will also be directly justified, as that term was explained above, if what justifies it is the fact that the perceiver "is reliable, made his observation in good light, was reasonably close to the object, and so on," *provided it is not also required that the he be justified in believing that these conditions are satisfied.* Thus this argument of Aune's has no tendency to show that perceptual beliefs cannot be directly justified, but only that they cannot enjoy that special sort of direct justification which we may term "self-justification." [5]

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   [4] See the distinctions between infallibility, indubitability, and immediacy in my "Varieties of Privileged Access," *American Philosophical Quarterly,* VIII, 3 (July 1971): 223–241.
   [5] In "Varieties of Privileged Access" I use the term 'self-warrant' for a belief that is justified by virtue of being a belief of a certain sort.

However some of Aune's arguments would seem to be directed against any immediate justification, and a consideration of these will reveal a third and more subtle discrepancy between Aune's target(s) and my version of foundationalism. Near the end of the passage Aune says:

> If we accept such a claim [observational or introspective] as true, it is only because of our confidence that a complex of background assumptions ... all point to the conclusion that it is true.

And again:

> For such men [clear-headed men], the acceptability of every claim is always determined by inference.

It certainly looks as if Aune is arguing that whenever a claim (belief) is justified it is justified by inference (by relation to other justified beliefs); and that would be the denial of 'There are directly justified beliefs'. But look more closely. Aune is discussing not what would justify the issuer of an introspective or observational claim in his belief, but rather what it would take to justify "us" in accepting his claim; he is arguing from a third-person perspective. Now it does seem clear that I cannot be immediately justified in accepting *your* introspective or observational claim as true. If I am so justified it is because I am justified in supposing that you issued a claim of that sort, that you are in a normal condition and know the language, and (if it is an observational claim) that conditions were favorable for your accurately perceiving that sort of thing. But that is only because I, in contrast to you, am justified in believing that p (where what you claimed is that p, and where I have no independent access to p) only if I am justified in supposing that you are justified in believing that p. My access to p is through your access. It is just because *my* justification in believing that p presupposes my being justified in believing that you are justified, that my justification has to be indirect. That is why I have to look into such matters as conditions of observation, and your normality. Thus what Aune is really pointing to is the necessity for "inferential" backing for any higher-level belief to the effect that someone is justified in believing that p. (I shall call such higher-level beliefs *epistemic beliefs*). His argument, if it shows anything, shows that no epistemic belief can be immediately justified. But it does nothing to show that the original observer's or introspector's belief that p was not immediately justified. Hence his argument is quite compatible with the view that an introspective belief is self-justified and with the view that an observational belief is justified just by being formed in favorable circumstances.

As a basis for further discussion I should like to present my own version of an argument against the possibility of immediate justification for epistemic beliefs—what I shall call the *second-level argument*:

A1 Where *S*'s belief that *p* is mediately justified, any jurisdiction for the belief that *S is justified in believing that p* is obviously mediate. For one could not be justified in this latter belief unless it were based on a justified belief that *S* is justified in accepting the grounds on which his belief that *p* is based. But even where *S* is immediately justified in believing that *p*, the higher-level belief will still be mediately justified, if at all. For in taking a belief to be justified, we are evaluating it in a certain way.[6] And, like any evaluative property, epistemic justification is a supervenient property, the application of which is based on more fundamental properties. A belief is justified because it possesses what Roderick Firth has called "warrant-increasing properties."[7] Hence in order for me to be justified in believing that *S*'s belief that *p* is justified, I must be justified in certain other beliefs, viz., that *S's belief that p* possesses a certain property, *Q*, and that *Q* renders its possessor justified. (Another way of formulating this last belief is: a belief that there is a valid epistemic principle to the effect that any belief that is *Q* is justified.) Hence in no case can an epistemic belief that *S* is justified in believing that *p*, itself be immediately justified.

Before proceeding I shall make two comments on this argument and its conclusion.

(1) It may appear that the conclusion of the argument is incompatible with the thesis that one cannot be justified in believing that *p* without also being justified in believing that one is justified in believing that *p*. For if being immediately justified in believing that *p* necessarily carried with it being justified in believing that I am justified in believing that *p*, it would seem that this latter justification would be equally immediate. I would not shirk from such an incompatibility, since I feel confident in rejecting that thesis. It is not clear, however, that there is any such incompatibility. It all depends on how we construe the necessity. If, e.g., it is that my being justified in believing that *p* necessarily puts me into possession of the *grounds* I need for being justified in the higher-level

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[6] For one attempt to explain the distinctively epistemic dimension of evaluation, see R. M. Chisholm, "On the Nature of Empirical Evidence," in Chisholm and R. J. Swartz, eds., *Empirical Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 225–230.

[7] In "Coherence, Certainty, and Epistemic Priority," this JOURNAL, LXI, 19 (Oct. 15, 1964): 545–557.

belief, then that is quite compatible with our conclusion that the latter can only be mediately justified.

(2) The conclusion should not be taken to imply that one must perform any conscious inference to be justified in an epistemic belief, or even that one must be explicitly aware that the lower-level belief has an appropriate warrant-increasing property. Here as in other areas, one's grounds can be possessed more or less implicitly. Otherwise we would have precious little mediate knowledge.

I have already suggested that the second-level argument is not really directed against II. To be vulnerable to this argument, a foundationalist thesis would have to require of foundations not only that *they* be immediately justified, but also that the believer be immediately justified in believing that they are immediately justified. A position that does require this we may call *iterative foundationalism*, and we may distinguish it from the earlier form (*simple foundationalism*) as follows (so far as concerns the status of the foundations):

> 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.[8]

It would not take much historical research to show that both positions have been taken. What I want to investigate here is which of them there is most reason to take. Since the classic support for foundationalism has been the regress argument, I shall concentrate on determining which form emerges from that line of reasoning.

II. THE REGRESS ARGUMENT

The regress argument seeks to show that the only alternatives to admitting epistemic foundations are circularity of justification or an equally unpalatable infinite regress of justification. It may be formu-

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[8] One should not confuse the respect in which Iterative is stronger than Simple Foundationalism with other ways in which one version of the position may be stronger than another. These include at least the following: (1) whether it is required of foundations that they be infallible, indubitable, or incorrigible; (2) whether foundations have to be self-justified, or whether some weaker form of direct justification is sufficient; (3) how strongly the foundations support various portions of the superstructure. I am convinced that none of these modes of strength requires any of the others, but I will not have time to argue that here. Note too that our version of the regress argument (to be presented in a moment) does nothing to support the demand for foundations that are strong in any of these respects.

lated as follows:

A2 Suppose we are trying to determine whether S is mediately justified in believing that p. To be so justified he has to be justified in believing certain other propositions, q, r, ... that are suitably related to p (so as to constitute adequate grounds for p). Let's say we have identified a set of such propositions each of which S believes. Then he is justified in believing that p only if he is justified in believing each of those propositions.[9] And, for each of these propositions q, r, ... that he is not immediately justified in believing, he is justified in believing it only if he is justified in believing some other propositions that are suitably related to it. And for each of these latter propositions ...

Thus in attempting to give a definitive answer to the original question we are led to construct a more or less extensive true structure, in which the original belief and every other putatively mediately justified belief form nodes from which one or more branches issue, in such a way that every branch is a part of some branch that issues from the original belief. Now the question is: what form must be assumed by the structure in order that S be mediately justified in believing that p? There are the following conceivable forms for a given branch:

A. It terminates in an immediately justified belief.

B. It terminates in an unjustified belief.

C. The belief that p occurs at some point (past the origin), so that the branch forms a loop.

D. The branch continues infinitely.

Of course some branches might assume one form and others another.

The argument is that the original belief will be mediately justified only if every branch assumes form A. Positively, it is argued that on this condition the relevant necessary condition for the original belief's being mediately justified is satisfied, and, negatively, it is argued that if any branch assumes any of the other forms, is not.

A. Where every branch has form A, this necessary condition is satisfied for every belief in the structure. Since each branch terminates in an immediately justified belief that is justified without necessity for further justified beliefs, the regress is ended along each branch. Hence justification is transferred along each branch right back to the original belief.

B. For any branch that exhibits form B, no element, even the origin, is justified, at least by this structure. Since the terminus is not justified, the prior element, which is justified only if the terminus is, is not justified. And, since it is not justified, its predecessor, which is justi-

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[9] I am adopting the simplifying assumption that, for each mediately justified belief, there is only one set of adequate grounds that S justifiably believes. The argument can be formulated so as to allow for "overjustification," but at the price of further complexity.

fied only if it is, is not justified either. And so on, right back to the origin, which therefore itself fails to be justified.

C. Where we have a branch that forms a closed loop, again nothing on that branch, even the origin, is justified, so far as its justification depends on this tree structure. For what the branch "says" is that the belief that p is justified only if the belief that r is justified, and that belief is justified only if . . . . , and the belief that z is justified only if the belief that p is justified. So what this chain of necessary conditions tells us is that the belief that p is justified only if the belief that p is justified. True enough, but that still leaves it completely open whether the belief that p *is* justified.

D. If there is a branch with no terminus, that means that no matter how far we extend the branch the last element is still a belief that is mediately justified if at all. Thus, as far as this structure goes, wherever we stop adding elements we have still not shown that the relevant necessary condition for the mediate justification of the original belief is satisfied. Thus the structure does not exhibit the original belief as mediately justified.

Hence the original belief is mediately justified only if every branch in the tree structure terminates in an immediately justified belief. Hence every mediately justified belief stands at the origin of a tree structure at the tip of each branch of which is an immediately justified belief.[10]

Now this version of the argument, analogues of which occur frequently in the literature,[11] supports only simple foundationalism. It has no tendency to show that there is immediately justified epistemic belief. So long as S *is* directly justified in believing some t for each branch of the tree, that will be. quite enough to stop the regress; for all that is needed is that he *be* justified in believing t without thereby incurring the need to be justified in believing some further

[10] The weakest link in this argument is the rejection of D. So far as I am aware, this alternative is never adequately explained, and much less is adequate reason given for its rejection. Usually, I fear, *being justified* is confused with exhibiting one's justification, and it is argued (irrelevantly) that one cannot do the latter for an infinite sequence of propositions. It is interesting in this connection that in two very recent attacks on foundationalism the infinite regress rejected by the regress argument is construed as a regress of *showing justification,* and in different ways the critics argue that the impossibility of completing an infinite sequence of such showings does not imply that there may not *be* an infinite sequence of mediate justification. See Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 15/6, and Frederick L. Will, *Induction and Justification* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1974), pp. 176–185.

An adequate treatment of the argument would involve looking into the possibility of an infinite structure of belief and the patterns of justification that can obtain there. Pending such an examination, the most one can say for the argument is that it is clear that mediate justification is possible on alternative A and not clear that it is possible on alternative D.

[11] See, e.g., Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge, Its Scope and Limits* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 171; Anthony Quinton, *The Nature of Things* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 119.

proposition. But perhaps there are other versions that yield the stronger conclusion. Indeed, in surveying the literature one will discover versions that differ from A2 is one or both of the following respects:

1. Their starting points (the conditions of which they seek to establish) are cases of being justified in believing that one knows (is justified in believing) that *p*, rather than, more generally, cases of being justified in believing that *p*.

2. They are concerned to establish what is necessary for *showing* that *p*, rather than what is necessary for *being justified* in believing that *p*.

Let's consider whether regress arguments with one or the other of these features will yield iterative foundationalism.

First let's consider an argument that differs from A2 only in the first respect. In his essay "Theory of Knowledge" in a volume devoted to the history of twentieth-century American philosophy, R. M. Chisholm [12] launches a regress argument as follows:

> To the question "What justification do I have for thinking that I know that *a* is true?" one may reply: "I know that *b* is true, and if I know that *b* is true then I also know that *a* is true." And to the question "What justification do I have for thinking I know that *b* is true?" one may reply: "I know that *c* is true, and if I know that *c* is true then I also know that *b* is true." Are we thus led, sooner or later, to something, *n*, of which one may say "What justifies me in thinking I know that *n* is true is simply the fact that *n* is true"? (263)

Chisholm then supports an affirmative answer to this last question by excluding other alternatives in a manner similar to that of A2.

Now the crucial question is: why does Chisholm conclude not just that mediate justification of claims to know requires *some* immediately justified beliefs, but that it requires immediately justified *epistemic* beliefs? Of course, having granted the general position that any mediately justified belief rests on some immediately justified belief(s), it is natural to suppose that mediately justified *epistemic* beliefs will rest on immediately justified *epistemic* beliefs. But we should not assume that all cases of mediate knowledge rest

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[12] *Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964). Because of the ambiguity of the term 'knowledge claim', formulations and criticisms of the argument are often ambiguous in the present respect. When we ask how a "knowledge claim" is justified, we may be asking what it takes to justify an assertion that *p* or we may be asking what it takes to justify a claim that one knows that *p*. Thus, e.g., we find Arthur Danto beginning the argument by speaking of *m* being justified in asserting *s* but then sliding into a consideration of what it takes to justify "claims to know" [*Analytical Philosophy of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge, 1968), pp. 26–28].

on foundations that are similar in content. On the contrary, every version of foundationalism holds that from a certain set of basic beliefs one erects a superstructure that is vastly different from these foundations. From knowledge of sense data one derives knowledge of public physical objects, from knowledge of present occurrences one derives knowledge of the past and future, and so on. So why suppose that *if* mediate epistemic beliefs rest on foundations, those foundations will be epistemic beliefs? We would need some special reason for this. And neither Chisholm nor, to my knowledge, anyone else has given any such reason. All rely on essentially the same argument as A2, which at most yields the weaker conclusion. They seem to have just assumed uncritically that the foundations on which epistemic beliefs rest are themselves epistemic.[13]

Thus, altering the regress argument in the first way does not provide grounds for iterative foundationalism. Let's turn to the second modification. In order to maximize our chances, let's combine it with the first, and consider what it would take to *show,* for some *p,* that I am justified in believing that *p.*[14] It is easy to see how one

[13] Lest this assumption still seem obvious to some of my readers, let me take a moment to indicate how mediate epistemic knowledge might conceivably be derived from nonepistemic foundations. Let's begin the regress with Chisholm and follow the line of the first ground he mentions: that I justifiably believe that *b.* (To simplify this exposition I am replacing 'know' with 'justifiably believe' throughout.) By continuing to raise the same question we will at last arrive at a *c* such that I have *immediate* justification for believing that *c.* Here my justification (for believing that I justifiably believe that *c*) will shift from one or more other justified beliefs to the appropriate "warrant-increasing" property. What is then required at the next stage is a justification for supposing the belief that *c* to have this property, and for supposing that this property does confer warrant. It is highly controversial just how claims like these are to be justified, but, in any event, at this point we have exited from the arena of explicit claims to being justified in a certain belief; what needs justification from here on are beliefs as to what is in fact the case, and beliefs as to what principles of evaluation are valid, not beliefs as to my epistemic relation to these matters, And, without attempting to go into the details, it seems plausible that, if a foundationalist view is tenable at all, these sorts of beliefs will rest on the same sort of foundation as other factual and evaluative beliefs.

[14] I have not located a clear-cut example of a regress argument with this starting point and with the conclusion in question. Nevertheless, the prospect seems tempting enough to be worth deflating. Moreover, it forces us to raise interesting questions concerning the concept of showing.

Just as the ambiguity of 'knowledge claim' led to versions' of the regress argument being indeterminate with respect to the earlier feature, so the process-product ambiguity of terms like 'justification' and 'justified' often make it uncertain whether a philosopher is talking about what it takes for a belief to *be* justified or about what it takes to *justify* a belief in the sense of *showing* it to be justified. See, e.g., C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1946), p. 187; Leonard Nelson, "The Impossibility of the 'Theory of Knowledge'," in Chisholm & Swartz, *op. cit.,* p. 8.

might be led into this. One who accepted the previous argument might still feel dissatisfied with simple foundationalism. "You have shown," he might say, "that it is *possible* to be justified in believing that *p* without having any immediately justified epistemic belief. But are we *in fact* justified in believing any *p*? To answer that question you will have to *show*, for some *p*, *that* you are justified in believing it. And the question is, what is required for that? Is it possible to do that without immediately justified epistemic belief?"

Now if we are to show, via a regress argument, that immediately justified epistemic belief is necessary for showing that I am justified in believing any *p*, it must be because some requirement for showing sets up a regress that can only be stopped if we have such beliefs. What could that requirement be? Let's see what is required for showing that *p*. Clearly, to show that *p* I must adduce some other (possibly compound) proposition, *q*. What restrictions must be put on a *q* and my relations thereto?

1. It is true that *q*.[15]
2. *q* constitutes adequate grounds for *p*.

These requirements give rise to no regress, or at least none that is vicious. Even if no proposition can be true without some other proposition's being true, there is nothing repugnant about the notion of an infinity of true propositions. Hence we may pass on.

3. I am justified in believing that *q*.[16]

This requirement clearly does give rise to a regress, viz., that already brought out in A2. We have seen that immediately justified epistemic belief is not required to end that regress; so again we may pass on.

4. I am justified in believing that I am justified in believing that *q*.

I am not prepared to admit this requirement, my reasons being closely connected with the point that one may be justified in be-

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[15] It may also be required that *p* be true, on the ground that it makes no sense to speak of my having shown what is not the case. ('Show' is a success concept.) I neglect this point since it has no bearing on our present problem.

[16] One may contest this requirement on the grounds that, if I have produced what is in fact a true adequate ground, that is all that should be demanded. And it may be that there is some "objective" concept of showing of which this is true. Nevertheless where we are interested in whether *Jones* has shown that *p* (rather than just whether "it has been shown that *p*," where perhaps all we are interested in is whether there *are* true adequate grounds), it seems that we must adopt this requirement in order to exclude wildly accidental cases in which Jones is asserting propositions at random and just happens to hit the mark.

lieving that q without even believing that one is so justified, much less being justified in believing that one is so justified. However, it is not necessary to discuss that issue here. Even if 4 is required, it will simply set up a regress of the sort exemplified by Chisholm's argument, an argument we have seen to have no stronger conclusion than simple foundationalism.

5. I am able to show that q.

This looks more promising. Clearly this requirement gives rise to a regress that is different from that of A2. If I can show that p by citing q only if I am able to show that q, and if, in turn, I am able to show that q by citing r only if I am able to show that r, it is clear that we will be able to avoid our familiar alternatives of circularity and infinite regress, only if at some point I arrive at a proposition that I can show to be correct without appealing to some other proposition. In deciding whether this argument provides support for iterative foundationalism, we must consider first whether requirement 5 is justified and, second, whether immediately justified epistemic belief would stop the regress so generated.

The requirement looks plausible. For, if I cannot show that q, then it looks as if I won't be able to settle whether or not it is the case that q, and in that case how can I claim to have settled the question about p? But this plausibility is specious, stemming from one of the protean forms assumed by that confusion of levels typified by the confusion of knowing that p with knowing that one knows that p. It's quite true that an inability to show that q will prevent me from showing *that I have shown that p;* for to do the latter I have to show that the grounds I have cited for p are correct. But why suppose that it also prevents me from showing that p? Can't I prove a theorem in logic without being able to prove that I have proved it? The former requires only an ability to wield the machinery of first-order logic, which one may possess without the mastery of metalogic required for the second. Similarly, it would seem that I can show that p, by adducing true adequate grounds I am justified in accepting, without being able to *show* that those grounds are true.

This conclusion is reinforced by the point that it is all too possible to *have* adequate grounds for a belief without being able to articulate them. Having observed Jones for a while, I may *have* adequate reasons for supposing him to be unsure of himself, without being able to specify just what features of his bearing and behavior provide those reasons. A philosophically unsophisticated per-

son (and many of the philosophically sophisticated as well) may be amply justified in believing that there is a tree in front of his wide-open eyes, but not be able to show that he is so justified. I may be justified in believing that Louis IX reigned in the thirteenth century, since I acquired that belief on excellent authority, but not now be able to specify that authority, much less *show* that it is reliable. Of course in the case under discussion, I am able to articulate my grounds for *p*, for *ex hypothesi* I have adduced adequate grounds for *p*. But to suppose that it is reasonable to require that I be able to *show* that those grounds are true, and the grounds of these grounds, and ... is to ignore the elementary point that a person may *have* adequate grounds for *q* and so be in an epistemically sound position vis-à-vis *q*, without being able to articulate those grounds. The latter ability is the exception rather than the rule with mediately justified belief.

But even if requirement 5 were justified and the show-regress were launched, immediately justified epistemic beliefs would be powerless to stop it. Let's say that I originally set out to show that I am justified in believing that *a*, and in the regress of showings thus generated I eventually cite as a ground *that I am immediately justified in believing that z* (call this higher-level proposition "*Z*"), where I am in fact immediately justified in believing that *Z*. How will this latter fact enable me to *show* that *Z*? As a result of being immediately justified in believing that *Z*, I may have no doubt about the matter; I may feel no need to show *myself* that *Z*. But of course that doesn't imply that I *have shown* that *Z*. However immediate my justification for accepting *Z*, I haven't *shown* that *Z* unless I adduce grounds for it that meet the appropriate conditions. And once I do that we are off to the races again. The regress has not been stopped. In the nature of the case it cannot be stopped. In this it differs from the original regress of *being* justified. *Showing* by its very nature requires the exhibition of grounds. Furthermore, grounds must be different from the proposition to be shown. (This latter follows from the "pragmatic" aspect of the concept of showing. To show that *p* is to present grounds that one can justifiably accept without already accepting *p*. Otherwise showing would lack the point that goes toward making it what it is.) Hence, there are no conceivable conditions under which I could show that *p* without citing other propositions that, by requirement 5, I must be able to show. If we accept requirement 5, if an infinite structure of abilities to show is ruled out, and if circularity is unacceptable, it follows that it is impossible ever to show anything. (That would

seem to be an additional reason for rejecting 5.) Since immediately justified epistemic belief would do nothing to stop the regress, this kind of regress argument can provide no support for iterative foundationalism.

III. FUNCTIONS OF FOUNDATIONALISM

Thus, although simple foundationalism is strongly supported by A2, we have failed to find any argument that supports iterative foundationalism. And the second-level argument strikes at the latter but not the former. Hence it would seem that foundationalism has a chance of working only in its simple form. This being the case, it is of some interest to determine the extent to which simple foundationalism satisfies the demands and aspirations that foundationalism is designed to satisfy, other than stopping the regress of justification. I shall consider two such demands.

Answering Skepticism. Skepticism assumes various forms, many of which no sort of foundationalism could sensibly be expected to answer. For example, the extreme skeptic who refuses to accept anything until it has been shown to be true and who will not allow his opponent any premises to use for this purpose, obviously cannot be answered whatever one's position. Talking with him is a losing game. Again there are more limited skepticisms in which one sort of knowledge is questioned (e.g., knowledge of the conscious states of other persons) but others are left unquestioned (e.g., knowledge of the physical environment). Here the answering will be done, if at all, by finding some way of deriving knowledge of the questioned sort from knowledge of the unquestioned sort. The role of a general theory of knowledge will be limited to laying down criteria for success in the derivation, and differences over what is required for foundations would seem to make no difference to such criteria.

The kind of "answer to skepticism" that one might suppose to be affected by our difference is that in which the skeptic doubts that we have any knowledge, a successful answer being a demonstration there is some. One may think that the possession of immediate epistemic knowledge will put us in a better position to do that job. Whether it does, and if so how, depends on what it takes to show that one knows something. The discussion of showing in section II yielded the following conditions for S's showing that p:

1. It is true that p.

2. S cites in support of p a certain proposition q such that:
   A. It is true that q.

B. *q* is an adequate ground for *p*.
C. *S* is justified in believing *q*.

We rejected the further condition that *S* be able to show that *q*. However, since we are here concerned with showing something to a skeptic, it may be that some further requirement should be imposed. After all, we could hardly expect a skeptic to abandon his doubt just on the *chance* that his interlocuter is correct in the grounds he gives. The skeptic will want to be given some reason for supposing those grounds to be correct; and this does not seem unreasonable. But we can't go back to the unqualified requirement that every ground adduced be established or even establishable, without automatically making showing impossible. Fortunately there is an intermediate requirement that might satisfy a reasonable skeptic while not rendering all showing impossible. Let's require that *S* be able to show that *r*, for any *r* among his grounds concerning which his audience has any real doubt. This differs from the unqualified requirement in leaving open the possibility that there will be grounds concerning which no reasonable person who has reflected on the matter will have any doubt; and if there be such it may still be possible for *S* to succeed in showing that *p*. Thus we may add to our list of conditions:

D. If there is real doubt about *q*, *S* is able to show that *q*.

Now when *p* is '*S* knows that *a*', the question is whether one or more of these conditions is satisfiable only if *S* has immediately justified epistemic beliefs. Let's consider the conditions in turn. As for 1, *S* can in fact know that *a* without having any directly justified epistemic belief, even if it should be the case that one can't know that *a* without knowing that one knows that *a*. For, as we saw in section II, there is no reason to doubt that all justified beliefs that one knows or is justified in believing something are themselves *mediately* justified. As for 2A and 2B, there should be no temptation to suppose that they depend on iterative foundationalism. Surely the grounds I adduce for the claim to know that *a* can be true and adequate without my having any immediately justified epistemic beliefs. Even if one or more of the grounds should themselves be claims to knowledge, the question of what is required for their truth can be handled in the same way as requirement 1. And adequacy, being a matter of relations between propositions, cannot depend on what sort of justification *S* has for one or another

belief. As for 2C, the discussion in sections I and II failed to turn up any reasons for supposing that immediately justified epistemic belief is required for my being justified in believing anything. That leaves 2D. But this has already been covered. To satisfy 2D I have to be able to *show* that (some of) my grounds are true. But that will not require conditions that are different in kind from those already discussed. Hence we may conclude that iterative foundationalism is not a presupposition of our showing that we do have knowledge. Of course it remains an open question whether we are in fact capable of showing that we know something. But if we are incapable, it is not because of the lack of immediately justified epistemic belief.

Self-consciously Reconstructing Knowledge from the Foundations. What I have in mind here is the enterprise classically exemplified by Descartes in the *Meditations*. There 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. Now we cannot assimilate Descartes to our scheme without some adjustments. For one thing, Descartes required indubitability and infallibility of his foundations. For another, he was not working with a true-justified-belief conception of knowledge. Translating Descartes into the conception of knowledge we are using and ignoring the extra demands of indubitability and infallibility, it is clear that Descartes takes his foundational beliefs to be immediately justified. I am justified in believing that I exist or that I am presently thinking about epistemology, regardless of what else I may be justified in believing. I am so justified just by the fact that the belief "records" the content of a clear and distinct intuition of the fact that makes the belief true. Hence, in order to *identify* a belief, *B*, as foundational Descartes must be justified in the higher-level belief that *B* is immediately justified. And if he is to perform this identification at the outset of his reconstruction, when nothing is recognized as mediately justified, this justification must be immediate, since he lacks a suitable body of other beliefs on which to base it.[17] Hence this enterprise is possible only if one can be immediately justified in taking a certain

17 To be sure, this short treatment leaves open the abstract possibility that the first such higher-level belief might be justified by some of the lower-level beliefs among the current foundations (if indeed the rules of the game permit their use in justification without first having been justifiably recognized *as* immediately justified). But it is clear that the foundational beliefs Descartes recognizes are radically unsuitable for this employment.

belief to be immediately justified. Here, then, is a point at which iterative foundationalism is genuinely needed.[18]

If iterative foundationalism is both without strong support and subject to crushing objections, it looks as if we will have to do without a self-conscious reconstruction of knowledge. How grievous a loss is this? Why should anyone want to carry out such a reconstruction? Well, if knowledge does have a foundational structure it seems intolerable that we should be unable to spell this out. And it may seem that such a spelling out would have to take the present form. But that would be an illusion. If there are foundations, one can certainly identify them and determine how other sorts of knowledge are based on them without first taking on the highly artificial stance assumed by Descartes in the *Meditations*. One can approach this problem, as one approaches any other, making use of whatever relevant knowledge or justified belief one already possesses. In that case immediate epistemic knowledge is by no means required, just as we have seen it is not required to show that one is justified in holding certain beliefs.

The Cartesian program has been branded as unrealistic on more grounds than one. And if I am right in holding that the simple form of foundationalism is the most we can have, I have provided one more ground. If iterative foundationalism is false, we can still have as much epistemic knowledge as you like, but only after we have acquired quite a lot of first-level knowledge. And why should that not satisfy any epistemic aspirations that are fitting for the human condition?

IV. ENVOI

As we have seen, the main reason for adopting foundationalism is the seeming impossibility of a belief's being mediately justified without resting ultimately on immediately justified belief. And the main reason for rejecting it (at least the main antecedent reason, apart from the difficulties of working it out) is that reason one version of which we found in the quotation from Aune. That is, it appears that the foundationalist is committed to adopting beliefs in the absence of any reasons for regarding them as acceptable. And this would appear to be the sheerest dogmatism. It is the aversion to

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18 Descartes apparently felt that he was required not only to *identify* his foundations as such before building anything on them, but also to *show* at that stage that each of the foundations had the required status. And not even iterative foundationalism could help him with that. In the attempt to show that he immediately knows that, e.g., 2 plus 2 equals 4, he is inevitably and notoriously led to make use of premises the knowledge of which needs to be shown just as much or as little as the proposition with which he begins.

dogmatism, to the apparent arbitrariness of putative foundations, that leads many philosophers to embrace some form of coherence or contextualist theory, in which no belief is deemed acceptable unless backed by sound reasons.

The main burden of this paper is that with simple foundationalism one can have the best of both arguments; one can stop the regress of justification without falling into dogmatism. We have already seen that Aune's form of the dogmatism argument does not touch Simple Foundationalism. For that form of the argument attacks only the ungrounded acceptance of claims *to knowledge or justification*; and simple foundationalism is not committed to the immediate justification of any such higher-level claims. But one may seek to apply the same argument to lower-level beliefs. Even simple foundationalism, the critic may say, must allow that some beliefs may be accepted in the absence of any reasons for supposing them to be true. And this is still arbitrary dogmatism. But the simple foundationalist has an answer. His position does not require anyone to accept any belief without having a reason for doing so. Where a person *is* immediately justified in believing that p, he may find adequate reasons for the higher-level belief that he is immediately justified in believing that p. And if he has adequate reasons for accepting this epistemic proposition, it surely is not arbitrary of him to accept the proposition that p. What better reason could he have for accepting it?

Lest the reader dismiss this answer as a contemptible piece of sleight-of-hand, let me be more explicit about what is involved. Though the simple foundationalist requires *some* immediately justified beliefs in order to terminate the regress of justification, his position permits him to recognize that all epistemic beliefs require mediate justification. Therefore, for any belief that one is immediately justified in believing, one *may* find adequate reasons for accepting the proposition that one is so justified. The curse (of dogmatism) is taken off immediate justification at the lower level, just by virtue of the fact that propositions at the higher level are acceptable only on the basis of reasons. A foundational belief, b, is immediately justified just because some valid epistemic principle lays down conditions for its being justified which do not include the believer's having certain other justified beliefs. But the believer will be justified in believing *that* he is immediately justified in holding b only if he has *reasons* for regarding that principle as valid and for regarding b as falling under that principle. And if he does

have such reasons he certainly cannot be accused of arbitrariness or dogmatism in accepting *b*. The absence of reasons for *b* is "compensated" for by the reasons for the correlated higher-level belief. Or, better, the sense in which one can have reasons for accepting an immediately justified belief is necessarily different from that in which one can have reasons for accepting a mediately justified belief. Reasons in the former case are necessarily "meta" in character; they have to do with reasons for regarding the belief as justified. Whereas in the latter case, though one *may* move up a level and find reasons for the higher-level belief that the original belief is mediately justified, it is also required that one have adequate reasons for the lower-level belief itself.

We should guard against two possible misunderstandings of the above argument. First, neither simple foundationalism nor any other epistemology can guarantee that one will, or can, find adequate reasons for a given epistemic proposition, or for any other proposition. The point rather is that there is nothing in the position that rules out the possibility that, for any immediately justified belief that one has, one can find adequate reasons for the proposition that one is so justified. Second, we should not take the critic to be denying the obvious point that people are often well advised, in the press of everyday life, to adopt beliefs for which they do not have adequate reasons. We should interpret him as requiring only that an *ideal* epistemic subject will adopt beliefs only for good and sufficient reason. Hence he insists that our epistemology must make room for this possibility. And, as just pointed out, Simple Foundationalism does so.

The dogmatism argument may be urged with respect to *showing* that *p*, as well as with respect to accepting the proposition that *p*. That is, the critic may argue that foundationalism is committed to the view that "foundations cannot be argued for." Suppose that in trying to show that *p* I adduce some grounds, and, the grounds being challenged, I try to show that they are true, and ... in this regress I finally arrive at some foundation *f*. Here, according to the critic, the foundationalist must hold that the most I can (properly) do is simply *assert f*, several times if necessary, and with increasing volume. And again this is dogmatism. But again Simple Foundationalism is committed to no such thing. It leaves something for the arguer to do even here, viz., try to establish the higher-level proposition that he is immediately justified in believing that *f*. And, if he succeeds in doing this, what more could we ask? Unless someone demands that he go on to establish the grounds appealed to in that

argument—to which again the simple foundationalist has no objection in principle. Of course, as we saw earlier, the demand that one establish every ground in a demonstration is a self-defeating demand. But the point is that the simple foundationalist need not, any more than the coherence theorist, mark out certain points at which the regress of showing *must* come to an end. He allows the possibility of one's giving reasons for an assertion whenever it is appropriate to do so, even if that assertion is of a foundation.

But, like many positions that give us the best of both worlds, this one may be too good to be true. Although I am convinced that simple foundationalism is the most defensible form of foundationalism, especially if it also divests itself of other gratuitous claims for foundations, such as infallibility and incorrigibility,[19] I do not claim that it can actually be made to work. Though it escapes the main antecedent objection, it still faces all the difficulties involved in finding enough immediately justified beliefs to ground all our mediately justified beliefs. And on this rock I suspect it will founder. Meanwhile, pending a final decision on that question, it is the version on which both constructive and critical endeavors should be concentrated.

WILLIAM P. ALSTON

Douglass College, Rutgers University

BOOK REVIEWS

Knowledge and Justification. JOHN L. POLLOCK. Princeton, N.J.: University Press, 1974. xii, 348 p. $15.00.

In spite of its title, this book is about justification and only very indirectly about knowledge. Pollock accepts the view that knowledge is justified true belief plus whatever is required to circumvent the well-known counterexamples, but his book makes no attempt to determine what is required. What the reader will find is an extensive, closely argued attempt to spell out when it is that our beliefs are justified, not when it is that our justified beliefs constitute knowledge. An extensive intellectual debt to Roderick Chisholm is acknowledged, and it seems fair to say that Pollock has accomplished a very professional and original update of Chisholmian epistemological analysis, an update which deals with such topics as the reidentification of physical things and persons, memory,

[19] For a position that approximates this, see Anthony Quinton, *The Nature of Things* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pt. II.