
UNIT 2 FOUNDATIONALISM AND COHERENTISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit - Epistemology deals with the nature and possibility of knowledge. A central problem in epistemology consists in the sceptical challenge which in a generalized manner casts doubt on our justifications for knowledge claims, thereby threatening the very possibility of knowledge. In order to defend the possibility of justification, and hence of knowledge, against that challenge, there are, two possibilities. First position is called (epistemological) foundationalism. We analyse the sceptic challenge by identifying a set of beliefs with some special epistemic property (like self-evidence, or infallibility), such that all other beliefs can be said to rest on that ultimate foundation of justification. Second, we investigate a coherentist view on which there are no ultimately privileged beliefs, but justification is still possible because it is provided by coherence within a set of beliefs. Which option is more reliable to account for epistemic justification has been one of the central issues in modern epistemology and the discussion still goes on. Let us also discuss about foundationalism and coherentism in this unit.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of foundationalism and coherentism;
- to distinguish foundationalism and coherentism;
- to relate it with epistemic justification;
- to explore the argument between foundationalism and coherentism
- to have a holistic understanding of justification of knowledge through foundationalism and coherentism;

- to apply this justification of knowledge especially foundationalism and coherentism in our day-to-day life.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The justification of beliefs about epistemic principles is the pivotal problem in epistemology i.e., principles stating which kinds of beliefs are justified and which are not. It is in general regarded as circular to justify such beliefs empirically. However, foundationalism claims that our empirical beliefs are rationally constrained by our non-verbal experience. Non-verbal experience is caused by events in the world. Some recent defenders of foundationalism have argued that, within a foundationalist framework, one can justify beliefs about epistemic principles empirically without incurring the charge of vicious circularity. Coherentism suggests that empirical beliefs are rationally constrained only by other, further empirical beliefs. And beliefs are caused by sensations and worldly events.

The debate over the structure of knowledge and justification is primarily one among those who hold that knowledge requires justification. From this point of view, the structure of knowledge derives from the structure of justification. With this introduction now let us proceed to see some of the definitions that explain about foundationalism and coherentism.

2.2 DEFINITION OF FOUNDATIONALISM AND COHERENTISM

The term foundationalism is often understood with derogatory connotations and without any clear definition both in literary and religious circles to refer to various positions that stand in contrast to relativism, such as the belief that there is absolute truth or a real world that we do not construct or the belief that it is possible to know anything rationally. Philosophers understood foundationalism as a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge.

Foundationalism is a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge. A foundationalist holds that all inferred beliefs must, to meet the requirements of rationality, be supported by a finite chain or tree of supporting beliefs, rather than by loops or circles of inference or by an infinite regress of reasons. According to foundationalism all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief. Foundationalism is any theory in epistemology that holds that beliefs are justified based on what are called *basic beliefs*.

Coherentism is a theory of epistemic justification. The view about the structure of justification or knowledge is coherentism. The thesis of coherentist's is normally formulated in terms of a denial of its contrary foundationalism. Coherentism thus claims, minimally, that not all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief.

The Rutledge encyclopaedia of philosophy defines coherentism is a matter of how the beliefs in a system of beliefs fit together or dovetail with each other, so as to constitute one unified, organized, and tightly structured whole. And it is clear that this fitting together depends on a wide variety of logical, inferential and explanatory relations among the components of the system.

Coherentism is not the coherence theory of truth. Coherence theory of truth holds that a proposition is true just in case it coheres with a set of propositions. This theory of truth is said to be too permissive. The reason is that this theory of truth does not tell anything about the conditions under which a belief is justified.

Coherentist insists that there is no way to appeal for justification to anything outside of one's system of beliefs because any such supposed source of justification would have to be apprehended by the person in question in a belief or belief-like state before it could play any justificatory role, and then it would be the belief rather than the external item that was the immediate source of justification. With this basic understanding let us move on to the next section where we explore foundationalism.

2.3 FOUNDATIONALISM

The basic idea of Rationalism is that the only source of sure knowledge is reason. We all know that senses sometimes deceive us and we make perceptual errors. In contrast $2+2=4$ can never be false. Therefore, they contend that all true and certain knowledge comes from our reason. Rationalists take mathematics as the model of knowledge and hold that certain knowledge is *a priori*. *A priori* means knowledge which is justified or known to be true independent of experience.

We have the Empiricists, on the other extreme, who hold that all genuine knowledge comes from or is justified by sense experience. Of course, the difference between rationalists and empiricists consists in whether reason or sense experience is considered as the primary and most reliable source of knowledge. The empiricists and rationalists are foundationalists. They differ only in what they consider to be the foundations. Empiricists hold the data of experience to be foundational whereas the rationalists give that role to innate ideas.

Traditional Foundationalism

The foundations of knowledge have been seen as infallible (which cannot be wrong), incorrigible (which cannot be refuted), and indubitable (which cannot be doubted). For empiricists these foundations consist in our beliefs about our own experience. Our beliefs are basic and non-basic. Our basic beliefs comprise such belief as that we are now seeing a blue shape in our visual field. In order to justify our non-basic belief we must be able to infer it from other beliefs. The claim of the traditional foundationalists is that inferential justifications are not required for our basic beliefs. There may not actually be a blue object in the world because we may be hallucinating, but, on the other hand, we cannot be wrong about the fact that we now believe that we are seeing something blue. Justifications for such beliefs is provided by experiential status that are not themselves beliefs, that is, by our immediate apprehension of the content of our sensory, perceptual experience, or what is sometimes termed 'the Given'. We may call it traditional foundationalism.

Modest Foundationalism

Some foundationalists hold that the Given is in some ways problematic. Yet they maintain a 'moderate' foundationalism. This view was promoted by Alvin Plantinga and Audi. Our perceptual beliefs about the world and our experience are not seen as infallible. We can believe that we see blue or we seem to see blue, yet either

belief can turn out to be unjustified. Non-conceptual perceptual experience does not play a justificatory role. Perceptual beliefs are simply self-justified. Such a view of perception remains foundationalist in nature because we still have basic beliefs, beliefs that are non-inferentially justified. Modest foundationalism avoids the dilemma that faces traditional foundationalism. It does not have to be infallible for a perceptual belief to be justified. We may call this a modest view of foundationalism or modest foundationalism.

Foundationalism holds that our justified beliefs are structured like a building. They are divided into a foundation and a superstructure, the latter resting upon the former. Beliefs belonging to the foundation are '*basic*'. Beliefs belonging to the superstructure are '*nonbasic*' and receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation. The claim of the foundationalism is that the superstructure of our belief system inherits its justification from a certain subset of perceptual beliefs upon which the rest sits. These beliefs are called 'Basic Beliefs'.

There are two types of arguments in foundationalism. On the one hand, they argue that non-foundational inference structures are rationally defective. These arguments include explanations of the vitiating nature of both circular reasoning and infinite regresses of reasons. On the other hand, foundationalists argue that there are foundational beliefs i.e. beliefs that it is rational to hold without inferring them from anything else and that these differ clearly from beliefs that do require support.

To prove the foundationalist account of justification it has to solve two problems. The first problem is by virtue of what exactly are basic beliefs justified? And the second problem is how do basic beliefs justify nonbasic beliefs? It would be better if we first consider the question of what it is that makes a justified belief basic in the first place. Then we can move on to the other questions.

Doxastic Basicity (DoBa)

Doxastic Basicity is that which makes basicity a function of how our doxastic system (belief system) is structured. *R*'s justified belief that *s* is basic if and only if *R*'s belief that *s* is justified without owing its justification to any of *R*'s other beliefs. For our understanding let us consider **DoBa** as **Doxastic Basicity**.

Let us now analyse what would, according to **Doxastic Basicity**, qualify as an example of a basic belief. Suppose we notice someone's T-shirt, and you also notice that that T-shirt looks yellow to us and so we believe. *Ba* It appears to me that that T-shirt is yellow.

Ba is an example of a justified belief. *DoBa* tells us that *Ba* is basic if and only if it does not owe its justification to any other beliefs of ours. So if *Ba* is indeed basic, there might be some item or other to which *Ba* owes its justification, but that item would not be another belief of ours. We call this kind of basicity 'doxastic' because it makes basicity a function of how our doxastic system is structured.

Now let us get back to the question of where the justification that attaches to *Ba* might come from. Note that *DoBa* merely tells us how *Ba* is '*not*' justified. It says nothing about '*how*' *Ba* is justified. Therefore *DoBa* does not answer that question. What we need, in addition to *DoBa*, is an account of '*what it is*' that justifies a belief such as *Ba*. According to one strand of foundationalist thought, *Ba* is justified because it can't be false, doubted, or corrected by others. So *Ba* is

justified because *Ba* carries with it an “*epistemic privilege*” such as infallibility, indubitability, or incorrigibility. Here *Ba* is justified by virtue of its intrinsic nature, which makes it possess some kind of an epistemic privilege. This is called *Privileged Foundationalism*.

Here we must notice that *Ba* is not a belief about the T-shirt. Instead, it’s a belief about how the T-shirt ‘*appears*’ to us. So *Ba* is an introspective belief about a perceptual experience of us. According to the thought we are considering here, a subject’s basic beliefs are made up of introspective beliefs about the subject’s own mental states, of which perceptual experiences make up one subset.

According to another version of foundationalism, *Ba* is justified not by virtue of possessing some kind of privileged status, but by some further mental state. That mental state, however, is not a further *belief*. Rather, it is the very ‘*perceptual experience*’ that *Ba* is about: the T-shirts’s looking yellow. Let *E* represent that experience. According to this alternative proposal, *Ba* and *E* are distinct mental states. The idea is that what justifies *Ba* is *E*. Since *E* is an experience, not a belief of ours, *Ba* is, according to *DoBa*, basic. This is called *Experiential Foundationalism*.

Privileged foundationalism restricts basic beliefs to beliefs about one’s own mental states. Experiential foundationalism is less restrictive. According to it, beliefs about external objects can be basic as well. Experiential Foundationalism combines to two crucial ideas: 1 when a justified belief is basic, its justification is not owed to any other belief; 2 what in fact justifies basic beliefs are experiences.

Let us briefly analyse how justification is supposed to be transferred from basic to nonbasic beliefs. There are two options: the justificatory relation between basic and nonbasic beliefs could be deductive or non-deductive. If we take the relation to be deductive, each of one’s nonbasic beliefs would have to be such that it can be deduced from one’s basic beliefs. This seems excessively demanding. If we consider a random selection of typical beliefs we hold, it is not easy to see from which basic beliefs they could be deduced. Therefore, foundationalists, typically conceive of the link between the foundation and the superstructure in non-deductive terms. They would say that, for a basic belief, *B*, to justify a nonbasic belief, *B*, it isn’t necessary that *B* entails *B*. Rather, it is sufficient that, given *B*, it is likely that *B* is true.

Now we are half between the two rivals in the epistemic justification or justification of knowledge let us proceed to explore more about coherentism the arch rival of foundationalism.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is your general understanding of Foundationalism?

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2) How do you understand Doxastic Basicity?

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2.4 COHERENTISM

In the history of philosophy coherentism is a relatively recent innovation. We can interpret Spinoza and Kant as advocating versions of coherentism. We can trace out the coherentist positions in nineteenth century through the absolute idealists.

The title holders of coherentism are the British Idealists F.H. Bradley (1846-1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923) and the Philosophers of Science Otto Neurath (1882-1945), Carl Hempel (1905-1997), and W.V. Quine (1908-2000). Unfortunately they were not able to distinguish epistemological and metaphysical issues. Notwithstanding it was developed and defended by a group of contemporary epistemologists and the noted personality here is Laurence Bonjour and Keith Lehrer and they were accompanied by Gilbert Harman, William Lycan, Nicholas Rescher, and Wilfrid Sellars. One should not judge by seeing this long list of name that coherentism is very popular among epistemologists. In spite of these many people developing and defending coherentism it has got only a minority position among the epistemologists. Coherentism is the main alternative to foundationalism

Coherentism implies that for a belief to be justified it must belong to a coherent system of beliefs. For a system of beliefs to be coherent, the beliefs that make up that system must “cohere” with one another. Usually, coherence is taken to imply something stronger than mere consistency. Coherentism adopts a subjective viewpoint regarding the items that need to cohere. It maintains that the system on which coherence is defined is the person’s system of beliefs. Coherentism holds that knowledge and justification are structured like a *web* where the strength of any given area depends on the strength of the surrounding areas. Coherentists deny that there are any basic beliefs.

The strongest form of coherentism says that belonging to a coherent system of beliefs is

- A. necessary for a belief to be justified and
- B. *by itself* sufficient for a belief to be justified.

This view is called *Strong Coherentism*. This view can be differentiated with two weaker varieties of coherentism. *Necessity Coherentism* just makes the necessity claim at (A). It imposes coherence as what is often called “a structural condition” on justification. Structural conditions tell us how beliefs must be related to one another if they are to be justified. However, since there might be additional non-structural conditions on justified belief, being related to one another in the required way may not be sufficient for justification.

The other view is called non-coherentist view which holds that coherence can boost the justification of a belief as long as that belief is already independently

justified in some way that is not due to coherence. According to this view coherence is sufficient to boost beliefs that are independently justified. This, however, is not thought to be strong enough to be called a coherentist view. To make coherence sufficient for justification we must claim that coherence is sufficient, by itself, to generate justification, in other words, coherence must generate justification *from scratch*. This view is called *Sufficiency Coherentism*.

Doxastic Coherentism (DoCo)

According to doxastic coherentism every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic vicinity. **Let us take for an example H)** That T-shirt is yellow. Here H is justified. According to coherentism, H receives its justification from other beliefs in the epistemic vicinity of H. They constitute our evidence or our reasons for taking H to be true. Now the question is which beliefs might make up this set of justification-conferring neighborhood beliefs? We have two approaches to answer this question. One is *Explanatory Coherentism* and the other is *Reliability Coherentism*.

Explanatory Coherentism

Explanatory coherentism is known as *inference to the best explanation*. In this approach, we form a belief about the way the T-shirt appears to us in our perceptual experiences, and a second belief to the effect that our perceptual experience, the T-shirt's looking yellow to us, is best explained by the assumption that H is true. Hence we believe that 1) we are having a visual experience E: the T-shirt looks yellow to us. 2) Our having E is best explained by assuming that H is true. Here *Explanatory coherentism strongly believes in* the T-shirts's actual yellowness is a superior explanation. That's why we are justified in believing H.

Explanatory coherentism finds difficult in make us understand in *nonepistemic* terms, why the favored explanation is really better than the competing explanations. Explanatory coherentism is supposed to make us understand where justification comes from. It doesn't 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.

Reliability Coherentism

Keep in mind what a subject's justification for believing *s* is all about: possessing a link between the belief that *s* and *s*'s truth. Presume the subject knows that the origin of her belief that *s* 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) We are having a visual experience E: the T-shirt looks yellow to us. 3) Experiences like (E) are reliable. This kind of coherentism is called *reliability coherentism*. If we believe 1 and 3, we are in possession of a good reason for thinking that the T-shirt is indeed yellow. So we are in possession of a good reason for thinking that the belief in question, H, is true. In this way we are justified in believing H according to reliability coherentism.

Reliability coherentism also faces a circularity problem. If H receives its justification in part because we also believe 3, 3 itself must be justified. But where would our justification for 3 come from? One answer would be: from our memory of

perceptual success in the past. Our visual experiences have had a good track record. We can't justifiably attribute a good track record to our perceptual faculties without using our perceptual faculties. Hence it would have to be legitimate to use a faculty for the very purpose of establishing the reliability of that faculty itself.

We have seen that explanatory coherentism and reliability coherentism each face its own distinctive circularity problem. Since both are versions of *doxastic* coherentism. Both are facing another difficulty i.e. they make excessive intellectual demands of ordinary subjects who are unlikely to have the background beliefs that are needed for justification. This can be avoided by another type.

Dependence Coherentism

Whenever we are justified in believing a proposition s_1 , our justification for believing s_1 depends on justification we have for believing some further propositions, $s_1, s_2, \dots s_n$.

According to explanatory coherentist to be justified in believing H, it's not necessary that we actually *believe* 1 and 2. However, it is necessary that we have *justification* for believing 1 and 2. It is having justification for 1 and 2 that gives you justification for believing H. A reliability coherentist might make an equivalent point. According to them to be justified in believing H, we need not believe anything about the reliability of our belief's origin. However, we must have justification for believing that our belief's origin is reliable i.e. we must have justification for 1 and 3. Both versions of dependence coherentism rest on the supposition that it is possible to have justification for a proposition without actually believing that proposition.

Dependence coherentism holds that justification need not come in the form of beliefs. It can come in the form of introspective and memorial evidence that 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 content and this is called *compromise position*. Having explored the foundationalism and coherentism let us go ahead to see the significance of foundationalism and coherentism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Illustrate Coherentism.

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2) How is Dependence coherentism solve the problem that is in explanatory coherentism and reliability coherentism?

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2.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF FOUNDATIONALISM

*In this section I would like to introduce to you the regress argument. Regress argument is the main argument for foundationalism. It's an argument from elimination. Regarding every justified belief B1, the question arises of where B1's justification comes from. If B1 is not basic, it would have to come from another belief, B2. But B2 can justify B1 only if B2 is justified itself. If B2 is basic, the justificatory chain would end with B2. But if B2 is not basic, we need a further belief, B3. If B3 is not basic, we need a fourth belief, and so on. Here we get two possibilities unless the consequent regress terminates in a basic belief i.e. the regress will either loop back to B1 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. From this regress argument we can understand foundationalism in two descriptions. The first description is an asymmetry condition on the justification of beliefs i.e. that inferential beliefs are justified in a way different from the way in which non-inferential beliefs are justified. The second description is an account of intrinsic or self-warrant for the beliefs which are foundationally warranted and which support the entire structure of justified beliefs.*

Foundationalism relies on the claim that it is not necessary to ask for justification of certain propositions, or that they are self-justifying. If someone makes an observational statement, such as 'the climate is very chill', it does seem reasonable to ask how they know - did they look out the window? Did someone else tell them? Did they just come in shivering? The regress argument merely defends experiential foundationalism against doxastic coherentism. Experiential foundationalism can be supported by citing cases like the yellow T-shirt example. Such examples make it credible to assume that perceptual experiences are a source of justification.

2.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF COHERENTISM

The coherence thinker rejects the foundationalist's presupposition that justification is linear. The coherentist response to the argument for foundationalism is only as plausible as the coherence theory of justification. Coherentism denies the soundness of the regression argument. The regression argument makes the assumption that the justification for a proposition takes the form of another proposition: P2 justifies P1, which in turn justifies P. According to coherentism, justification is a holistic process. P is not justified as a part of some inferential chain of reasoning, but because it coheres with some system of which it forms a part. Here it is necessary for coherentism to explain in some detail what it means for a system to be coherent.

Another significant idea that we have to notice is the distinction between subjective and objective approaches. The most popular objective approach is explanatory coherentism, which defines coherence in terms of that which makes for a good explanation. On such a view, hypotheses are justified by explaining the data, and the data are justified by being explained by our hypotheses. The central task for such a theory is to state conditions under which such explanation occurs.

A different objective account of the coherence relation has been presented by Bonjour. He has mentioned the following five features in his account 1) logical consistency, 2) the extent to which the system in question is probabilistically consistent, 3) the extent to which inferential connections exist between beliefs, both in terms of the number of such connections and their strength, 4) the inverse of the degree to which the system is divided into unrelated, unconnected subsystems of belief, and 5) the inverse of the degree to which the system of belief contains unexplained anomalies. These factors are a good beginning toward an account of objective coherence, but by themselves they are not enough. We need to be informed what function on these five factors is the correct one by which to define coherence. That is, we need to know how to weigh each of these factors to provide an assessment of the overall coherence of the system.

Coherentism insists that it is always reasonable to ask for a justification for any statement. Coherentism challenges that foundationalism provides an arbitrary spot to stop asking for justification so that it does not provide reasons to think that certain beliefs do not need justification. Coherentism typically holds that justification is solely a function of some relationship between beliefs. They attack foundationalism by arguing that no plausible version of the view will be able to supply enough in the way of foundational beliefs to support the entire structure of belief.

Coherentists have gone beyond negative philosophy to provide a positive characterization of their view. Coherentists typically adopt a subjective viewpoint regarding the items that need to cohere, maintaining that the system on which coherence is defined is the person's system of beliefs. Social versions of coherentism may define coherence relative to the system of common knowledge in a given society. Thus we come to the end of this unit.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is the significance of foundationalism?

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2) Reflect on the importance of coherentism.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a brief notion of foundationalism and coherentism. The argument of foundationalism is very simple. If knowledge is to be reasonable and our beliefs are justified, then those justified beliefs must be based on some other beliefs which are reasonable and they on further beliefs and so on. But ultimately this process of justification must end up in some beliefs that require no justification or are self-justified or self-evident. Foundationalists insist that there must be some beliefs that are directly or immediately justified, as opposed to being justified by inferences from other beliefs. They maintain that these special non-inferentially justified beliefs form the foundation of all knowledge and that all the rest of our beliefs are ultimately justified in relation to the foundational beliefs. To establish this understanding we have analysed various kinds of foundationalism. Then we moved on to explore coherentism, the rival of foundationalism. It is obvious that logical coherence is important in any system of beliefs if it is to be accepted as true; otherwise we would lapse into meaninglessness.

Coherentism clearly showed us that the better a belief system hanging together the more coherent it is. Here it stressed the importance of logical consistency in the justification of knowledge. To establish this conception we have analysed different kinds of coherentism. Finally we concluded with the significance of foundationalism and coherentism.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Doxastic Basicity	: it is that which makes basicity a function of how our doxastic system (belief system) is structured.
Basic beliefs	: beliefs that give justificatory support to other beliefs, and more derivative beliefs are based on those more basic beliefs that are self-justifying or self-evident.
Non-basic beliefs	: beliefs that receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation.
Doxastic Coherentism	: it is the idea that every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic vicinity
A priori	: knowledge which is justified or known to be true independent of experience.
Compromise position	: the possibility that a belief is justified, not by receiving <i>any</i> of its justification from other beliefs, but solely by suitable perceptual experiences and memory content.

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2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Foundationalism is any theory in epistemology that holds that beliefs are justified based on what are called *basic beliefs*. Foundationalism is a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge. It holds that all inferred beliefs must, to meet the requirements of rationality, be supported by a finite chain or tree of supporting beliefs, rather than by loops or circles of inference or by an infinite regress of reasons. Here we have traditional foundationalism which holds that knowledge is infallible and modest foundationalism which holds that our perceptual beliefs about the world and

our experience are not seen as infallible. There are two kinds of arguments one is that that non-foundational inference structures are rationally defective and the other is that there are foundational beliefs; beliefs that it is rational to hold without inferring them from anything else and that these differ clearly from beliefs that do require support.

- 2) Doxastic Basicity is that which makes basicity a function of how our doxastic system (belief system) is structured. *R*'s justified belief that *s* is basic if and only if *R*'s belief that *s* is justified without owing its justification to any of *R*'s other beliefs. We call a basicity 'doxastic' because it makes basicity a function of how our doxastic system is structured.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) Coherentism is a theory of epistemic justification. The view about the structure of justification or knowledge is coherentism. The thesis of coherentist's is normally formulated in terms of a denial of its contrary foundationalism. Coherentism thus claims, minimally, that not all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief. Coherentist insists that there is no way to appeal for justification to anything out side of one's system of beliefs because any such supposed source of justification would have to be apprehended by the person in question in a belief or belief-like state before it could play any justificatory role, and then it would be the belief rather than the external item that was the immediate source of justification. *Strong Coherentism*, *Necessity Coherentism*, *Sufficiency Coherentism*, *Doxastic Coherentism* which holds that every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic vicinity. Further we have *Explanatory Coherentism* and *Reliability Coherentism* and the important one is *Dependence Coherentism*.
- 2) The explanatory coherentism and the reliability coherentism each face its own distinctive circularity problem. Since both are versions of *doxastic* coherentism. Both face another difficulty i.e. they make excessive intellectual demands of ordinary subjects who are unlikely to have the background beliefs that are needed for justification. This can be solved by dependence coherentism which holds that justification need not come in the form of beliefs. It can come in the form of introspective and memorial evidence that gives a subject justification for beliefs about either reliability or explanatory coherence. 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 content and this is called compromise position. Thus **Dependence coherentism solves the** problem in explanatory coherentism and reliability coherentism.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

- 1) First and foremost it is the regress argument. If there are justified beliefs, there must be basic beliefs. From this regress argument we can understand foundationalism in two descriptions. The first description is an asymmetry condition on the justification of beliefs i.e. that inferential beliefs are justified in a way different from the way in which non-inferential beliefs are justified. The second description is an account of intrinsic or self-warrant for the beliefs which are foundationally warranted and which support the entire structure of justified beliefs.

- 2) The coherentist response to the argument for foundationalism is only as plausible as the coherence theory of justification. Coherentism denies the soundness of the regression argument. Another significant idea that we have to notice is the distinction between subjective and objective approaches. The most popular objective approach is explanatory coherentism, which defines coherence in terms of that which makes for a good explanation. Coherentism insists that it is always reasonable to ask for a justification for any statement. Coherentism challenges that foundationalism provides an arbitrary spot to stop asking for justification and so that it does not provide reasons to think that certain beliefs do not need justification. Coherentism typically holds that justification is solely a function of some relationship between beliefs.