

# *Modest Infinitism*<sup>1</sup>

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## **Introduction**

Infinitism, a theory of the structure of justification most recently developed and defended by Peter Klein, is the view that justification is a matter of having an infinite series of non-repeating reasons for a proposition. I argue that infinitism is preferable to foundationalism in that only infinitism can plausibly account for two important features of the structure of justification: 1) justification admits of degrees and 2) complete justification makes sense.

## **I Two Theoretical Requirements**

William Alston writes:

[Justification] is a matter of degree. One can be more or less justified in believing that *p*. If, e.g., what justifies one is some evidence one has, one will be more or less justified depending on the amount and strength of the evidence. However, in this essay I shall, for the sake of simplicity, treat justification as absolute.<sup>2</sup>

There are two themes in this quotation. The first is the widely accepted point that justification comes in degrees. The second is that it is acceptable and sometimes worthwhile to speak of justification simpliciter or,

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1 Many thanks to Jason Kawall, Robert Howell, Matthew McGrath, Ernie Sosa, and Thane Weedon.

2 W. Alston, 'Concepts of Epistemic Justification,' in P.K. Moser, ed., *Empirical Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield 1986), 25

as Fred Dretske puts it, to speak of ‘full, complete, or adequate’ justification.<sup>3</sup> Normally, this second aspect of justification is explained as the degree of justification required for knowledge. But many philosophers think that knowledge requires something less than complete justification. A common complaint against skepticism is that its requirements are too high; the skeptic requires certainty, whereas we should be less demanding. Perhaps complete justification requires infallibility. But we can know without being infallible. So, complete justification is not the same thing as the degree of justification required for knowledge, though infallibilists may hold that, in fact, complete justification is necessary for knowledge.

What I mean by ‘complete justification’ is justification for which there is no higher degree. Even if one puts the degree of justification required for knowledge somewhat below this level, it still seems to make sense to talk about complete justification. Justification, then, is such that:

- 1) it admits of degrees and
- 2) complete justification makes sense.

A theory of the structure of justification that can explain both of these aspects will be preferable to one that cannot. We can express this fact as two requirements on theories of the structure of justification:

- 1) The degree requirement: a theory of the structure of justification should explain why or show how justification is a matter of degree.
- 2) The completeness requirement: a theory of the structure of justification should explain why or show how complete justification makes sense.

The most obvious way to satisfy these requirements is to show what it is for justification to change in degree and what it is for justification to be complete.

The degree requirement is more immediately plausible than the completeness requirement. This is because it is more clearly part of the concept of justification that it admits of degrees than that it admits of completion. Certainly, if complete justification does make sense, a theory of the structure of justification that explains what it is will be preferable

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3 F. Dretske, ‘The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge,’ in *Perception, Knowledge, and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), 49

to a theory that does not. However, the completeness requirement will only be legitimate if complete justification does make sense. For the time being I will assume that it does, reserving for later the possibility that complete justification does not make sense and that, therefore, the completeness requirement is false.

I recommend 'infinitism' as a theory of the structure of justification that plausibly satisfies both requirements better than its more well known competitors. Infinitism, most recently developed and defended by Peter Klein, makes justification a matter of having an infinite series of non-repeating reasons. The main competitor I want to consider is foundationalism, though in two forms, the second of which includes the most plausible forms of coherentism. Foundationalism, roughly, is the view that a proposition is justified for you iff you have a series of non-repeating reasons, ultimately founded on a reason (the foundational reason) that needs no further reason. This general view can be divided into two, depending on the foundationalist's stance on why the foundational reason needs no further reason. The first division, what I will call 'traditional foundationalism,' states that the foundational reason needs no further reason because the truth of the foundational reason is sufficient to make the foundational reason justified.<sup>4</sup> Call these sorts of reasons 'self-justifying.' Included among them might be propositions like *I have a headache* and *There is at least one proposition that is not both true and false*. Roderick Chisholm is a traditional foundationalist in this sense. He requires foundational reasons to be 'directly evident' — such that 'what justifies me in counting it as evident that *a* is *F* is simply the fact that *a* is *F*.'<sup>5</sup>

Chisholm talks of a subject being justified in believing propositions simply in virtue of their truth. I talk of propositions that are justified simply in virtue of their truth. Both are acceptable, because there is a coherent distinction between 1) 'S is justified in believing that p' and 2) 'p is justified for S.' Goldman calls the former an '*ex post* use' of 'justified' and the latter an '*ex ante* use.'<sup>6</sup> The latter, in most cases, has to do with what your available evidence supports, regardless of what you currently believe. The former has to do with what you currently believe and,

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4 Justification is indexed to a subject at a time, both of which, throughout the article, I at times suppress.

5 R. Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge*, 1st ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1966), 28

6 A. Goldman, 'What is Justified Belief?' in G.S. Pappas, ed., *Justification and Knowledge* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel 1979), 21

crucially, what you are basing your beliefs on. So, your evidence might support *p* and, therefore, *p* might be justified for you. You might also believe that *p*, but be nonetheless unjustified in doing so because you base your belief that *p* not on the supporting evidence, but on wishful thinking. *p* is justified for you but you are not justified in believing that *p*. In the rest of this article, I use the locution ‘*p* is justified for *S*.’ So, traditional foundationalism is the view that the foundational reasons are self-justifying in the sense that their truth is sufficient for them to be justified for any subject.<sup>7</sup>

The second division, what I will call ‘metajustificatory foundationalism,’ states that the foundational reason needs no further reason because of some (perhaps contingent) feature of the foundational reason; perhaps the foundational reason is the deliverance of a reliable belief forming process, or the result of a properly functioning mechanism, or the foundational reason is situated appropriately in an appropriately comprehensive, coherent, and explanatory web of believed propositions. This allows some versions of coherentism to count as foundationalist or at least consistent with foundationalism. As such, it may seem to make my version of metajustificatory foundationalism too broad. However, it has become common in the literature to allow that some versions of coherentism are consistent with or even kinds of foundationalism.<sup>8</sup> Of course, some coherence theories are not compatible with foundationalism. These are views according to which the structure of justification is literally circular — according to which the justification of a proposition is derived from a further proposition whose justification is derived,

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7 Reasons are propositions. You have a reason to believe something just in case you have access to a certain kind of proposition that bears a certain kind of epistemic relation to the proposition you have a reason to believe. Therefore, ‘belief in a reason’ just means belief in the proposition that is the reason and ‘the truth of a reason’ just means the truth of the proposition that is the reason.

8 See, for example, E. Sosa, ‘We have found a surprising kinship between coherentism and substantive foundationalism, both of which turn out to be varieties of a deeper foundationalism’ (‘Reflective Knowledge in the Best Circles,’ in M. Steup, ed., *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue* [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001]), 180; R. Chisholm, ‘Many coherent theorists seem to believe ... that they can develop a nonfoundational coherence theory of epistemic justification — even though no one has ever shown just *how* this might be done’ (*Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall 1989], 88); and L. BonJour, ‘Weak foundationalism thus represents a kind of hybrid between strong foundationalism and the coherence views discussed earlier’ (‘Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?’ in P.K. Moser, ed., 100).

ultimately, from the initial proposition. These sorts of coherence theories are not plausible. BonJour notes:

Incautious advocates of coherentism have sometimes seemed to endorse the idea that such a picture is acceptable if only the circles are “large enough.” But the obvious objection to circular chains of justification, to which the size of the circle seems irrelevant, is that they involve circular reasoning and hence have no genuine justificatory force.<sup>9</sup>

More plausible coherence theories hold not that the justification of a proposition derives from other propositions in a circular manner, but that the justification of a proposition is in virtue of its situation in a coherent framework of propositions. BonJour continues:

The contrary suggestion is that justification, when properly understood, is ultimately *nonlinear* or *holistic* in character, with all of the beliefs in the system standing in relations of mutual support, but none being epistemically prior to the others. In this way, it is alleged, any true circularity is avoided. Such a view amounts to making the system itself the primary unit of justification, with its component beliefs being justified only derivatively, by virtue of their membership in an appropriate sort of system. And the property of the system, in virtue of which it is justified, is of course specified as coherence. (123)

It is this more plausible sort of coherentism, in which some propositions are justified in virtue of some property (namely, their place in a coherent system) rather than in virtue of an additional reason, that is compatible with foundationalism.

For metajustificatory foundationalism, unlike traditional foundationalism, the truth of the foundational reason does not ensure its justification. The foundational reason is only justified when the reason has whatever metajustificatory feature is supposed to supply the justification. Importantly, metajustificatory foundationalists cannot require that a believer have access to the metajustificatory feature as a reason for the foundational reason. If this were required, the ‘foundational’ reason would no longer be foundational. It would simply be another reason in the series — another reason that requires a further reason.<sup>10</sup>

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9 L. BonJour, ‘The Dialectic of Foundationalism and Coherentism,’ in J. Greco and E. Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell 1999), 123

10 This from BonJour: ‘If a given putative knower is himself to be epistemically responsible in accepting beliefs in virtue of their meeting the standards of a given epistemological account, then it seems to follow that an appropriate metajustification of those standards must, in principle at least, be available to *him*’ (*The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1985], 10). To the

I do not mean for the distinction between traditional and metajustificatory foundationalism to capture every essential distinction that has been drawn between kinds of foundationalism. In particular, what distinguishes traditional foundationalism from metajustificatory foundationalism is neither 1) that traditional foundationalism's foundations are justified internalistically while metajustificatory foundationalism's foundations are justified externalistically nor 2) that traditional foundationalism's foundations are justified in virtue of intrinsic properties of the foundational proposition (like its modal status or its semantic content), while metajustificatory foundationalism's foundations are justified in virtue of extrinsic properties of the foundational proposition (like the relation it bears to the subject or the probability of its truth). For example, one very traditional form of foundationalism has it that a foundational proposition is justified for you iff you clearly and distinctly perceive it. There may be features that this view shares with what I am calling traditional foundationalism that it doesn't share with other forms of metajustificatory foundationalism. Nonetheless, I classify this view with metajustificatory foundationalism, because it is not in virtue of the foundational proposition's truth that the foundational proposition is justified. I divide foundationalism the way I do because the two different kinds of foundationalism violate different requirements. Traditional foundationalism, in my sense, violates the degree requirement. Metajustificatory foundationalism, in my sense, violates the completeness requirement.

Infinetism differs from both of these accounts in not sanctioning terminating series of reasons. On Klein's infinitist account, for a proposition to be justified, it must be supported by a non-terminating series of non-repeating reasons. What constitutes a reason, and this goes for foundationalism too, of course, is going to have to be filled in. Not just any proposition given in support of another will count as a reason. Whatever the proper specification of a reason, Klein's infinitism requires that you have an infinite series of them to support any proposition that is justified for you.

Infinetism is preferable to both traditional and metajustificatory foundationalism, because only infinitism can plausibly satisfy both the degree requirement and the completeness requirement.

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extent one agrees with Bonjour, one cannot be what I am calling a metajustificatory foundationalist. Metajustificatory foundationalists hold that your foundations require no further reasons. To require that the metajustificatory (in Bonjour's sense) be available to you is to require that you have reasons available to support the foundations. This is just to deny metajustificatory foundationalism.

## II Why Traditional Foundationalism Doesn't Satisfy the Degree Requirement

Traditional foundationalism may have a good way to satisfy the completeness requirement, but it has no plausible way to satisfy the degree requirement. Traditional foundationalism says:

Justification is a matter of having a series of non-repeating reasons, ultimately founded on a self-justifying reason.

For foundationalism, the degree to which a proposition is justified can depend on only two things: the degree to which the foundational reason is justified and the degree to which the inferences between reasons preserve that justification. I will consider initially only the possibility that foundationalism can satisfy the two requirements by specifying how the foundational reason should be treated — say, by making the degree to which the foundational reasons are justified admit of degrees. I will reserve until section IV the possibility that foundationalism can allow the justification preserved by inferences to admit of degrees. Given this, it is easy to see how traditional foundationalism can satisfy the completeness requirement:

$p$  is completely justified for you iff you have a series of non-repeating reasons for  $p$ , ultimately founded on a completely self-justifying reason.

How will traditional foundationalism handle the degree requirement? For traditional foundationalism, the foundational reasons are self-justifying. If the foundational reasons can be justified to greater or lesser degrees, then the degree to which the foundational reasons are self-justifying must admit of degrees. That way, the degree to which a proposition is justified can covary with the degree to which the foundational reason is self-justifying.

For self-justification to be a matter of degree, something like the following must be correct:

A reason is self-justifying to a degree iff necessarily, if the reason is true, the reason is justified to at least that degree.

Certain introspective states might be less than completely self-justifying. For example, the proposition that you are having a sense-impression of a speckled hen with more than 15 speckles might be self-justifying only to a degree. Nothing more need be true, a traditional foundationalist might say, than the fact that you are having a sense-impression of a

speckled hen with more than fifteen speckles to justify to a degree that you are having such a sense-impression. But it is not completely justified for you that you are having such a sense-impression. For one thing, once the number of introspected speckles gets too high (say, around thirteen), you are not completely reliable about their number.

The obvious question to ask such a traditional foundationalist is 'Why are some foundational reasons self-justifying to one degree while other foundational reasons are self-justifying to another?' The most plausible answers to this question seem like they are going to refer to your relative reliability vis a vis the different reasons. But these answers are not available to a traditional foundationalist, because your reliability vis a vis the different reasons is a metajustificatory feature that explains why one reason automatically confers one degree of justification while another reason automatically confers a different degree of justification.

To answer our question, the traditional foundationalist will have to say that it is only in virtue of the truth of each reason that it confers the degree of justification it does. But all true self-justifying reasons, no matter the degree to which they are self-justifying, are true. Truth *per se* cannot determine which self-justifying reasons are more or less self-justifying. There will have to be some feature of each particular self-justifying proposition in virtue of which it is self-justifying to the degree that it is.<sup>11</sup> But 1) this is unsatisfying in that it provides no overarching explanation for why some propositions are highly self-justifying and some less-so and 2) the answer is inconsistent with traditional founda-

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11 Some might think that the same objection can be raised even to those traditional foundationalists who allow only completely self-justifying reasons to serve as foundations. We can ask why self-justifying reasons are self-justifying. If the traditional foundationalist has an answer, it seems like it must involve some metajustificatory feature. If the traditional foundationalist has no answer, it seems like the view has arbitrary foundations. (See Bonjour, *Structure*, 30-3, for a similar argument.)

However, the traditional foundationalist can argue that completely self-justifying reasons are not self-justifying in virtue of some metajustificatory feature, nor are they arbitrary. It may be that certain reasons have to be *assumed* to be self-justifying if skepticism is to be avoided. This is a rather familiar form of rationalist argument for the existence of *a priori* justification. Here, the main implication of these arguments is that there might be a way to non arbitrarily show that we need to take certain reasons to be completely self-justifying without requiring that there be a metajustificatory feature which makes those reasons self-justifying. What convinces us we need to take those reasons to be self-justifying need not make them self-justifying.

This move does not seem to be available in the case of reasons that are self-justifying only to a degree.



tionalism in any case. Therefore, any plausible form of traditional foundationalism will have to say that self-justifying reasons and, hence, foundational reasons, do not admit of degrees.

If foundational reasons do not admit of degrees, and if justification is a matter of having a series of reasons terminating in these foundational reasons, then justification can't admit of degrees either.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, traditional foundationalism cannot plausibly satisfy the degree requirement.

### III Why Metajustificatory Foundationalism Doesn't Satisfy the Completeness Requirement

Metajustificatory foundationalism, like traditional foundationalism, holds that justification is a matter of having a series of non-repeating reasons ultimately founded on a reason that does not require further reasons. Unlike traditional foundationalism, metajustificatory foundationalism requires that there be some feature, aside from the foundational reason's truth, that the foundational reason must have in order to be justified.

Metajustificatory foundationalists can take widely different positions depending on what they think the crucial feature is. For example, metajustificatory foundationalists can be coherentists or reliabilists. A reliabilist metajustificatory foundationalist can explain the fact that the foundational reason does not require further reasons by pointing out that it was delivered by a reliable belief-forming process. A coherentist metajustificatory foundationalist can explain the fact that the foundational reason does not require further reasons by pointing out that the foundational reason (and perhaps the target belief itself) is appropriately nested in an appropriately comprehensive, coherent, and explanatory web of beliefs.

Either of these views can satisfy the degree requirement. Reliabilist metajustificatory foundationalists can satisfy the degree requirement by making the degree of justification a matter of the degree to which the foundation-delivering process is reliable. Coherentist metajustificatory foundationalists can satisfy the degree requirement by making the degree of justification a matter of the degree of comprehensiveness, coherence, and explanatory value of the web of beliefs in which the foundational reason is appropriately nested. In general, a metajustificatory

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12 This is on the initial assumption that foundationalism can only satisfy the requirements by specifying the way the foundational reasons should be treated.

tory foundationalist can satisfy the degree requirement by making the important metajustificatory feature itself admit of degrees.

But metajustificatory foundationalists cannot plausibly satisfy the completeness requirement without becoming *de facto* infinitists. As noted above, metajustificatory foundationalism cannot require that you have access to the foundation-justifying metajustificatory feature as a reason. So, metajustificatory foundationalism's explanation of complete justification will have to look, roughly, something like:

p is completely justified for you iff you have a non-repeating series of reasons for p, ultimately founded on a reason that exemplifies the metajustificatory feature to the highest possible degree.

Reliabilist metajustificatory foundationalists can hold that a proposition is completely justified iff it is ultimately founded on reasons that are 100% reliable. Coherentist metajustificatory foundationalists can hold that a proposition is completely justified iff it is ultimately founded on reasons that are appropriately nested in a completely coherent, completely comprehensive, and completely explanatory web of beliefs.<sup>13</sup> Generally, metajustificatory foundationalists who believe that justification is a matter of your foundations having feature F will hold that a proposition is completely justified iff it is ultimately founded on reasons that exemplify F to the highest possible degree (that is, completely exemplify F).

This way of satisfying the completeness requirement, however, will not work. No matter what the metajustificatory foundationalist substitutes for 'feature F,' a proposition will become more justified for you if you come to have as a reason that the foundational reason completely exemplifies feature F and that complete justification is a matter of your foundational reasons completely exemplifying feature F. For example, if you come to have as a reason that your foundational reason was delivered by a 100% reliable belief forming process, then the proposition founded on that foundation will be more justified for you than it was before.<sup>14</sup> But then the reliabilist metajustificatory foundationalist has not

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13 It may turn out that, for a web of beliefs to be completely coherent, completely comprehensive, and completely explanatory, it is necessary that you have an infinite series of reasons. If so, then any coherentism that satisfies the completeness requirement will end up being a version of infinitism.

14 It does not matter why your coming to have as a reason that the feature is present and important will increase the degree to which the foundational reason is justified (for example, even if your coming to have as a reason that a foundation is reliably delivered increases the reliability of the foundation). If the degree to which the

provided a satisfactory account of complete justification. Complete justification, after all, is that degree of justification that cannot be increased further. To not give a satisfactory account of this concept is to not satisfy the completeness requirement. This is not to say that reliabilism is false. For reliabilism may well be a correct story of one way to increase the degree to which a proposition is justified and, more importantly, reliabilism may have a good story to tell about the degree of justification required for knowledge. But reliabilist metajustificatory foundationalism cannot provide the whole story.

Can the reliabilist plausibly deny that if you come to have as a reason that your foundational reason was delivered by a 100% reliable belief forming process, then the proposition founded on that foundation will be more justified for you than it was before? Consider a pure form of reliabilism, one that states:

Reliabilism: the degree to which *p* is justified for *S* is solely a matter of the degree to which the process that delivered *p* is reliable.

According to pure reliabilism, the reliability of the process that delivered *p* is the sole determining factor in *p*'s justification. Even if you come to have as a reason that the process is completely reliable the degree to which *p* is justified will not increase. So, in arguing that *p*'s justification will increase if you come to have as a reason that the *p*-delivering process is completely reliable, I seem to be begging the question against this form of reliabilism.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the worry is not limited to the reliabilist. If I am begging the question against pure reliabilism, I am begging the question against other theories as well, not all of them externalist. Consider the view that *p* is completely justified iff it is clearly and distinctly perceived. I argue

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foundational reason is justified can always be increased, then the metajustificatory foundationalist has not satisfied the completeness requirement.

15 Some reliabilists will want to insist that your coming to have as a reason that a certain process initially delivered *p* changes the processes currently sustaining *p*. So the degree to which *p* is justified might increase because the relevant *p*-delivering and *p*-sustaining processes might change. Alternatively, a reliabilist could insist that your coming to have as a reason that a certain process initially delivered *p* changes the context in which the process is to be evaluated. The reliability of processes is to be evaluated relative to a context. Relative to the context in which further reasons have been offered, the reliability of the process might change. On these sorts of views, reliabilism is not incompatible with infinitism. Therefore, I construe the radical reliabilism presented here as not allowing for the reliability of the process to change with further reasons.

that if you were to come to have as a reason that *p* is clearly and distinctly perceived and why this is important, the degree to which *p* is justified would increase. So, if I am begging the question against pure externalist reliabilism, I am begging the question against this form of Cartesian internalism as well.

So much the worse for these views. Pure reliabilism of the sort marked out above has the implication that your coming to have as a reason that the proposition-delivering process is reliable is not relevant to the degree to which the delivered proposition is justified. This is implausible. Its implausibility is reflected in the fact that most reliabilists (and externalists in general) have given up on the pure version marked out above and accepted defeater conditions.<sup>16</sup> These conditions state that reasons of the form 'Process *F* is unreliable' can undermine the justification conferred by *F* (even if *F* is in fact reliable). If these conditions are plausible, then the corresponding support conditions should be just as plausible. If reasons of the form 'Process *F* is unreliable' can undermine the justification conferred by *F*, then reasons of the form 'Process *F* is reliable' should be able to supplement the justification conferred by *F*. Likewise, reasons of the form '*p* is clearly and distinctly perceived' should be able to supplement the justification of propositions that are clearly and distinctly perceived.<sup>17</sup>

Any version of metajustificatory foundationalism must provide some justification-conferring feature about which you do not need to know. Complete justification will simply be the justification that a proposition has when that feature is exemplified to the highest possible degree. But the degree of justification can always be increased if you come to have

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16 Goldman accepted defeater conditions as early as 1979 and reaffirmed them in 1986. He says, 'S's believing *p* at *t* is justified if and only if ... this permission is not undermined by S's cognitive state at *t*' (*Epistemology and Cognition* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1986], 63). Robert Nozick says, 'while it would be too strong to require the belief [that the tracking conditions are satisfied] in order for the person to know ... perhaps it is appropriate to require that he not believe the negations of [the tracking conditions]' (R. Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1981], 196). Alvin Plantinga makes notorious use of defeater conditions. See, for example, A. Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press 1993), 40-2. And Thomas Senor notes that 'any plausible theory of justification will have to include some no-defeater clause' ('The Prima/Ultima Facie Justification Distinction in Epistemology,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56 [1996] 551-66, at 558).

17 This, plausibly, is exactly what Descartes thought. That is why it was so crucial not only that he did clearly and distinctly perceive that he exists, but that could show that he did, why it mattered, and what validates clear and distinct perception.

as a reason that the feature is present and important. For one thing, if you come to have as a reason that the feature is present and important, you will better be able to answer challenges to the proposition.

There are those who take the ability to answer challenges to be an essential part of justification. Keith Lehrer, for example, suggests a 'justification game' as a method to determine whether or not a subject is justified in accepting a proposition. Lehrer says:

The justification game is played in the following way. The claimant presents something she accepts as true. The skeptic may then raise any objection in the form of a competitor of what the claimant presents. If what the claimant accepts is something that is more reasonable for her to accept than the skeptical objection, that is, if the competitor cited by the skeptic is beaten, then the claimant wins the round. If all the competitors raised by the skeptic are beaten, then the claimant wins the game. If she wins the game, she is personally justified in accepting what she presented. (Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge* [Boulder: Westview 1990], 119)

Lehrer doesn't here refer to degrees of justification. But if Lehrer's proposal is acceptable, a similar proposal could be made regarding degrees of justification: something like, *your degree of justification in believing that p increases the more you can answer suggested challenges*. A similar mechanism could be used as a criterion to determine whether p is justified for you.

I agree with Lehrer's contention that the ability to answer challenges is an important part of justification, and I will make use of it below in the discussion of infinitism. I trust that if you share this intuition, the above argument is already convincing to you. Even without Lehrer's contention, it seems that if you come to have as a reason that the crucial metajustificatory feature is important and completely exemplified for some proposition, p, then you will at least be in a better epistemic position vis a vis p than you would be otherwise. Your epistemic position can be improved in one of two ways: 1) the degree to which p is justified for you can increase and 2) the degree to which it is justified for you that p is justified for you can increase.<sup>18</sup>

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18 This formulation of the second way is ambiguous and contains a reference to justification simpliciter. More precisely, here is what I mean: for each degree of justification p might have, it is justified to a degree that p is justified to that degree. When the degree to which it is justified for you that p is justified increases, *ceteris paribus*, the degree to which it is justified for you that p is justified for you to some particular degree increases at the expense of the degree to which it is justified for you that p is justified for you to some lesser degree.

The more precise formulation of Mini J-J, then, is:

(Mini J-J) *Ceteris paribus*, if it is more justified for you at t1 than at t2 that p is

However, I take the aforementioned widespread acceptance of defeater conditions to indicate a similarly widespread acceptance of something like the following principle:

(Mini J-J) *Ceteris paribus*, if it is more justified for you at t1 than at t2 that it is justified for you that p, then it is more justified for you at t1 than at t2 that p.

It is because (undercutting) defeaters can make it less justified for you that p is justified for you that those same defeaters actually make p less justified for you.

Mini J-J is more plausible than standard K-K or J-J principles. A standard J-J principle implies that if p is justified for you then it is also justified for you that p is justified for you. Mini J-J does not have that implication. It leaves open the possibility that p is be justified for you even though it is not justified for you that p is justified for you. It also leaves open the denial of the converse: it is justified for you that p is justified for you, though p is not justified for you. Mini J-J requires only that, all else being equal, the more it's justified for you that p is justified for you, the more p is justified for you.

That something like Mini J-J is widely accepted shouldn't surprise us. For epistemic justification, all agree, is at least in some sense, at least partly a matter of getting truth and avoiding falsehood. For it to become more justified for you that a proposition is justified for you is, at least partly, for it to become more justified for you that, by believing the proposition, you are satisfying whatever truth-related constraints are involved in justification. It shouldn't surprise us, therefore, to find out that an increase in the degree to which it is justified that p is justified will, *ceteris paribus*, result in an increase in the degree to which p is justified. Because of this, because Mini J-J seems a natural accompaniment to widely accepted defeater conditions, and because it seems intuitively plausible, I will assume Mini J-J is true.

If Mini J-J is true, then any time your epistemic situation vis a vis p is improved, the degree to which p is justified for you will increase. This is because, again, there are only two ways for your epistemic situation vis a vis p to improve: by an increase in the degree to which p is justified for you and by an increase in the degree to which it is justified for you that p is justified for you. In the former instance, the degree to which p is

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justified to a certain degree, while it is less justified for you at t1 than at t2 that p is justified to a lesser degree, then it is more justified for you at t1 than at t2 that p.

justified is automatically increased. If your epistemic situation is improved in the latter way, it does so via an increase in the degree to which 'p is justified for you' is justified. But, by Mini J-J, the degree to which 'p is justified for you' is justified cannot increase without a corresponding increase in the degree to which p is justified for you. So, your epistemic situation vis a vis p cannot improve without the degree to which p is justified also increasing. Therefore, if you come to have as a reason that the crucial metajustificatory feature is completely present and important, then the degree to which p is justified for you will, *ceteris paribus*, increase. So, the metajustificatory foundationalist's account of complete justification allows complete justification to be surpassed in degree. The metajustificatory foundationalist's 'complete justification' is not complete at all.

#### IV Other Ways for Foundationalism to Satisfy the Two Requirements

As earlier noted, for a foundationalist, the degree to which a proposition is justified can depend on only two things: the degree to which a foundational reason is justified, and the degree to which the inferences between reasons preserve that justification. In the above arguments I confine the foundationalist's options to different ways of treating the foundational reason. Here, I want to explore the possibility that the foundationalist can satisfy the degree and completeness requirements by making the inferences between reasons admit of degrees.

To satisfy the completeness requirement, a foundationalist must have some account of what it would take for a proposition (p) to be completely justified. For p to be completely justified, on the foundationalist's picture, the foundational reason must be completely justified, and the inferences between each reason must completely preserve complete justification. On the view we're considering, not all inferences completely preserve complete justification. The inferences between reasons admit of degrees. This requires that there be some feature (F) of inferences that explains why some inferences preserve justification to a greater degree and some to a lesser — and, more importantly, explains why some inferences completely preserve complete justification.

If you have as a 'metajustificatory reason' that the inference from one reason to another completely exemplifies F, and it is justified for you why F is important, then the degree to which p is justified will be *ceteris paribus* higher than if you lack this metajustificatory reason. This is so for each inference in your series. For p to be completely justified, then, for each inference you must have as a metajustificatory reason that the inference completely exemplifies F. This metajustificatory reason is just that: a

reason; there must be an inference from it to some other reason. The inference will require its own metajustificatory reason (if it is to preserve complete justification). This is not to say that a proposition can't be very well justified even if you lack a metajustificatory reason for every inference. Nor is it to say that a proposition can't be justified to the degree required for knowledge. But a proposition can't be completely justified unless you do have a metajustificatory reason for every inference, because were you to have that metajustificatory reason, the proposition would be a bit more justified for you.

Did not Lewis Carroll show that logically valid inferences do not require you to have a metajustificatory reason in order for those inferences to preserve justification?<sup>19</sup> It may be that, when the inferences in question are confined to logically valid inferences, it is out of place to demand that you have the inference rule as a reason. This does not mean that it would not increase the degree of justification were it to become justified for you that your inference is logically necessary. When the inferences in question are more or less justification-preserving, if it becomes more justified for you that the inference is particularly strong, then the degree to which the conclusion is justified will increase. In particular, if, as we are assuming in this section, the inferences in question might be weak or strong — more or less justification preserving — for it to become justified for you that your inference is logically valid seems like it would increase the conclusion's degree of justification a great deal.

If complete justification requires that, for every inference, you have a metajustificatory reason, then complete justification requires that you have an infinite series of reasons. For, if you have a metajustificatory reason, then there must be something to be inferred from it. This inference requires its own metajustificatory reason. So begins an infinite series. Foundationalism cannot allow that the inferences between reasons admit of degrees without falling into infinitism.

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19 L. Carroll, 'What the Tortoise Said to Achilles,' *Mind* 104 (1995) 691-3



## V Why Informatism Satisfies Both Requirements

Informatism, generally, is the view that justification is a matter of having a non-terminating series of non-repeating reasons. Informatism, then, can satisfy the degree requirement by making the degree to which a proposition is justified for you proportional to the length of a series of reasons you have for the proposition.

According to this view, that you have a headache might come to be more justified for you if you come to have as a reason that and why introspection is likely to deliver true beliefs. This is not to say that the proposition can't be justified to a degree if you lack the metajustification for introspection. Perhaps it could even be justified to the degree required for knowledge. However, it would be odd if coming to have as a reason that and why introspection is reliable didn't raise the degree to which introspected propositions are justified. For one thing, as noted above, if you come to have as a reason that and why introspected propositions are likely to be true, you can better answer challenges to introspection.

Ernest Sosa has also suggested that a proposition can move up the epistemic ladder by our becoming aware of how our faculties work. He says that 'we can more generally distinguish *animal* knowledge, which requires only that one track nature on the one hand, and on the other *reflective* knowledge, which requires also awareness of *how* one knows, in a way that precludes the unreliability of one's faculties.'<sup>20</sup> By making degree of justification a matter of the length of your series of reasons, we can apply Sosa's remarks on knowledge to justification.

One problem with making degree of justification a matter of the length of your series of reasons is that it looks like some highly justified propositions have a much shorter series of reasons available for them than some not so highly justified propositions. For example, your reasons for the proposition that  $1+1=2$  might constitute quite a short series, though the proposition is highly justified for you. Your reasons for the proposition that your sister is arriving tonight at 8:16 on flight 172 are, suppose, quite complicated. The latter is most likely not nearly as justified for you as the former. Nonetheless, the informatist can require at least

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20 See E. Sosa, 'The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence Versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge,' in M. Steup, ed., 199. Sosa seems to be talking about a change (for the better) in kind of knowledge, whereas my view is that the change is a matter of degree, not of kind. How great a difference this ultimately amounts to, I leave up to the reader. Whether Sosa ultimately should be categorized as an informatist, I similarly leave up to the reader.

this: for any particular series of justifying reasons, the farther down that list you go, the more justified you will be. A single reason might suffice to make it highly justified that  $1+1=2$  (if it's a reason of the right sort), whereas it might take a much longer series of reasons to justify to the same degree that your sister is arriving tonight on flight 172.

Furthermore, you might believe that  $1+1=2$  because it seems right to you (on the basis of rational insight). Or you might believe it only on the basis of a complex series of reasons that involves looking at your calculator. We might want to say that  $1+1=2$  is more justified for you in the former case, even though the series of reasons is shorter. The infinitist can allow for this by claiming that, for any particular series of reasons, the degree of justification can be increased by adding an adequate reason to the end of that series.

Infinitism, then, can satisfy the degree requirement by claiming:

All else being equal, the longer your series of adequate reasons for a proposition, the more justified it is for you,

where the 'all else being equal' includes the reasons earlier in the series.<sup>21</sup>

The 'adequate' (Klein's term) in this principle is necessary, since not just any reasons or series of reasons count as good ones. As John Post has pointed out, we can construct regresses of reasons, each of which entail the truth of the next reason, for any contingent proposition. There needs to be a way to distinguish acceptable, justification conferring regresses from those that do not confer justification.<sup>22</sup> Klein states:

Not just any proposition will serve as a reason for *p*. The literature is full of various proposed characterizations of what makes a reason adequate and infinitism, per se, is not committed to any particular one of them. Contextualism could be correct. Reliabilism could be correct. It could be that the reason has to be true or sufficiently close to the truth. For the sake of this paper, all that is required is to recognize that

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21 This formulation does not allow us to compare degrees of justification between different propositions. So, it will not predict which is more justified: your well supported belief that  $2+2=4$  or your poorly supported belief that your sister is arriving tonight on flight 172. This is acceptable, however, since a theory of the structure of justification should not be expected to tell us which propositions are justified or what in particular goes into justification. How justified a particular proposition is will depend on what kinds of reasons support it. This will be determined by what goes into something being an adequate reason. And on this issue, theories of the structure of justification can remain mostly neutral.

22 J. Post, 'Infinite Regresses of Justification and Explanation,' *Philosophical Studies* 38 (1980) 31-52

there is some set of features that a proposition must have if it is to serve as an adequate reason. We can simply refer to this set as “feature F.”<sup>23</sup>

We can add to the list of candidates for feature F the traditional foundationalist’s ‘self-justification’ and the coherentist’s metajustificatory features. I presume that there are degrees of adequacy and that an adequate theory of adequacy will spell that out. The crucial point is that what goes into making something an adequate reason is one issue; what structure those reasons must take to satisfy the degree and completeness requirements is another.

My assumption is that, if you and I have exactly similar series of adequate reasons for the same proposition (p), but you can provide an adequate reason for a member of that series while I cannot, then p is justified to a greater degree for you than for me. The intuition behind this assumption is strongest, it seems to me, in particular cases. If you, but not I, have a well worked out and likely true theory of introspection, then this puts you in a better epistemic position vis a vis introspected propositions than I am. If you, but not I, can answer the skeptic, this puts you in a better epistemic position vis a vis propositions about the external world. I note above that if you have further adequate reasons whereas I do not, you will be in a better position to answer challenges. I also give some reason (involving the principle, Mini J-J) to believe that, if a further reason puts you in an epistemically better position vis a vis some proposition, then that proposition will be justified to a higher degree than it would otherwise be. But if you do not share my intuitions on the particular cases — if you do not think that further adequate reasons will put you in an epistemically better position — the arguments in this article will probably not be too forceful.

What I can do is try to relieve some doubts about this assumption. You might think that longer series of reasons are more complicated and therefore harder to understand or remember. Or you might think that longer series of reasons are more prone to error, for the simple reason that there are more reasons and inferences involved in a longer series than in a shorter series, and so there is more that can go wrong.

Neither of these is a good reason to think that the degree to which a proposition is justified is not increased with further adequate reasons. The mere fact that longer series of reasons are harder to understand should not prevent them from providing a greater degree of justification

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23 P. Klein, ‘Why Not Informatism?’ in R. Cobb-Stevens, ed., *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy 5: Epistemology* (Boston: Philosophy Documentation Center 2000), 203

than shorter series of reasons. First, it is not clear that to understand a longer series of reasons, you must understand the series of reasons as a whole. It may be that you only need to understand each reason when it is called for in the reasoning process. If so, then longer series may in principle be no harder to understand than shorter ones, provided the extra reasons are not particularly hard to understand. Second, even if you must understand the series as a whole, degree of justification is only increased by a longer series of reasons if you *have* the longer series of reasons. Whatever it is to have a series of reasons, presumably it requires that you be able to understand the reasons in the series; it requires that you be able to understand the series. If you can already understand a series of reasons, the fact that the series of reasons is harder to understand than a shorter one makes no difference.

Likewise, that a longer series of reasons has more elements in it that can go wrong does not imply that degree of justification is decreased by a longer series of adequate reasons. Suppose you and I each have a series of adequate reasons to support some proposition,  $p$ :

My reasoning:  $R1 \rightarrow p$

Your reasoning:  $R2 \rightarrow R1 \rightarrow p$

You and I are in precisely the same position vis a vis reason  $R1$  except for the fact that, in addition to whatever relation I stand in to  $R1$ , you also have  $R2$  in  $R1$ 's support. The worry is that, because you have a longer series of reasons in support of  $p$ , there is more to go wrong. Therefore,  $p$  might be justified to a lesser degree for you than for me.

$p$  must be justified at least to a degree for me (or else  $p$  could not be justified to a lesser degree for you). If so, then this must either be because  $R1$  is self-justifying, or because there is some metajustification for  $R1$  (for example, that  $R1$  was delivered by a reliable belief-forming process). Either way, you are in the same boat vis a vis  $R1$  as I am. After all, you and I, aside from the fact that you have  $R2$  as an adequate reason for  $R1$ , are identical vis a vis  $R1$ . For  $p$  to be justified to a lesser degree for you than for me, somehow the fact that you have  $R2$  as a reason for  $R1$  must defeat whatever it is that justifies  $R1$  for me (because that very thing would otherwise justify  $R1$  for you). How could that be? If  $R1$  was delivered by a reliable belief-forming process for me, then it was for you also, regardless of whether you have as a reason that  $R1$  was delivered by a reliable belief-forming process. It is true that, were you to come to have as a (false) reason that  $R1$  was delivered by an unreliable belief-forming process, this might provide a defeater for  $R1$ . But, two issues: 1) the same goes for me. Were I to come to have as a (false) reason that  $R1$  was delivered by an unreliable belief-forming process,  $R1$  would be defeated for me. 2) Even if the fact that you have  $R2$  as a reason for  $R1$

somehow makes R1 more easily defeated for you (say, by it becoming justified for you that R2 is false), the fact remains that it is not justified for you that R2 is false. R2 is an adequate reason for R1. Given these two facts, it is hard to see how p could become less justified for you simply because you have a further adequate reason for one of the reasons that both you and I have for p.

If you have a longer series of adequate reasons in support of p, then it becomes more justified for you that one of your reasons is false. But this fact alone cannot make p less justified for you than for me since, even if one of your reasons is false, you can still rely on the very reasons I can rely on. It does not follow from the mere fact that one of your reasons is false that p is false. What follows is that you can no longer use that reason in your series. But you have just as much reason to believe that R1 is false as I do. So, you have at least the same right to rely on R1 as I do. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the degree of justification will decrease if you have further adequate reasons to support a series of adequate reasons. It seems much more plausible that the degree to which a proposition is justified increases the longer you can defend a particular line of adequate reasoning.

To flesh out this view, I will commit myself here to what I did not before: that the ability to answer challenges to a proposition is an important part of what makes that proposition justified. Some challenges are more important than others. But, all else being equal, the more challenges to a proposition you can adequately answer, the higher will be the degree to which the proposition is justified for you (where, as above, the 'all else being equal' includes the reasons elsewhere in the array). It follows that to be able to defend a single line of reasoning even to infinity cannot suffice for complete justification. Even an infinite series of adequate reasons won't necessarily answer all objections. For complete justification, not only must you have an infinite series of adequate reasons to back up a proposition, you must be able to meet all challenges to that proposition and to all of your reasons and inferences with an infinite series of adequate reasons. We might call the ability to do this 'having an *infinite array of adequate reasons* for a proposition.'

Obviously, no proposition is or could be justified to anything like this degree for any human. But many propositions are justified to a degree for us — hopefully, a degree sufficient for knowledge. Perhaps propositions can be completely justified for an infinite being (which would give us a nice way of distinguishing divine knowledge from human knowledge; I won't, however, hold that up as an advantage). Either way, this does seem to be an explanation of what complete justification is, and an explanation that cannot be provided by a foundationalist. Of the two — foundationalism and infinitism — only infinitism makes justification a matter of having a non-terminating series of reasons, so only infinitism

can make complete justification a matter of having an infinite array of reasons.

So, the infinitist can satisfy the completeness objection by claiming:

p is completely justified for S iff S has an infinite array of adequate reasons for p.<sup>24</sup>

Propositions cannot become completely justified for you if the way you acquire reasons is by adding them sequentially. It is impossible to complete an infinite series, let alone an infinite array, by sequentially adding a single member of that series at a time. Likewise, a proposition cannot be completely justified for you if it is required that you be able to sequentially produce an infinite series of reasons. What is required is that you have an array of reasons such that, for every reason in the array, you have a further adequate reason. Whether you must be able to grasp this infinite array as a whole, or you need only be disposed to produce an adequate reason no matter what challenge you are faced with, I will leave up to the reader.

The difference between justification to a degree and complete justification is akin to Klein's ('Why Not?' 204 ff.) distinction between provisional justification and complete justification. For Klein, a proposition is provisionally justified if it is based on an adequate reason, even if the reason is not itself part of an infinite regress of available, non-repeating, adequate reasons. That same proposition is completely justified if the reason is itself part of such an infinite regress. Klein's distinction is therefore similar to a distinction between justification to a degree and complete justification, but with two differences: 1) Because Klein makes no mention of degrees of provisional justification, no provisionally justified propositions are more provisional than any other. There is no necessary gradation among provisionally justified propositions. Not so for justification to a degree. 2) Provisional justification is not enough, according to Klein, for knowledge. To be justified for you to the degree required for knowledge, a proposition must be provisionally justified and you must also have an infinite series of available, non-repeating reasons. Again, not so for justification to a degree. We can allow that some beliefs can count as knowledge though only justified to a degree

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24 This is not a version of foundationalism, because p's justification does not derive from the fact that p is situated in such an array. Rather, p's justification derives from the reasons that support p, whose justification is in turn derived from the reasons that support them. This makes infinitism akin to the implausibly circular model of coherentism discussed above, not to the foundationalist version of coherentism.

somewhat less than complete justification. This latter point is what makes the version of infinitism offered here 'Modest.'

This might make some worry that, unless the degree of justification required for knowledge is the infinitist's 'complete justification,' then infinitism will have given no answer to the question of what degree of justification is required for knowledge. Unless infinitism says that, for knowledge, you need to have an infinite series of adequate reasons, it looks like the degree of justification required for knowledge will be arbitrary.

It is true that infinitism (on my construal) will give no answer to the question of what degree of justification is required for knowledge. But infinitism is not the only epistemic theory with this difficulty. Any fallibilistic epistemic theory will have trouble specifying a non-arbitrary threshold for knowledge. Certainty is too high a threshold (because the theory is fallibilistic), and any degree of justification less than certainty seems arbitrary.<sup>25</sup> To solve this problem we might want to say that the degree of justification required for knowledge varies according to non-epistemic features of your situation. The degree of justification required for knowledge would thus be determined by context (for example, your stake in the belief being true). Whether one is tempted by a view like this (and it is open to the infinitist to adopt it), the difficulty infinitism runs into in setting a threshold for knowledge is not unique to infinitism and therefore cannot be decisive against it.

## VI Conclusion

Klein argues for infinitism by offering two principles of good reasoning, one that requires a reason for every justified proposition, and a second that prohibits circular reasoning. As the only view that adheres to these two principles, infinitism is preferable to foundationalism and coherentism.<sup>26</sup> I find this argument persuasive.

My argument does not depend explicitly on these principles. I argue, rather, that only infinitism plausibly satisfies the degree requirement and the completeness requirement. This argument is helpful for answer-

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25 See R. Rudner, 'The Scientist *Qua* Scientist Makes Value Judgments,' *Philosophy of Science* 20 (1953) 1-6, and D. Owens, *Reason Without Freedom: The Problem of Epistemic Normativity* (London: Routledge 2000), esp. 26 for arguments to this effect.

26 P. Klein, 'Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons,' *Philosophical Perspectives* 13: *Epistemology* (1999), 297-326, at 298-9

ing some objections that Klein has difficulties with. First, my argument does not share with Klein's the assumption that increases in degree of justification require further reasons. My argument relies only on the claim that further adequate reasons are sufficient to increase degree of justification. This seems like a less controversial premise. Sensations might serve to justify beliefs based on them. If so, since sensations aren't reasons, an increase in degree of justification need not be based on reasons. However, were it to become more justified for you that and why basing beliefs on sensations is, say, truth-conducive, the degree of justification for your sensations-based beliefs would increase. Your sensations can figure in reasons that would further increase the degree of justification. They can also 'go it alone.'

Second, by emphasizing degrees of justification, one can offer a more satisfying answer to the 'Finite Mind Objection.' The Finite Mind Objection states that if justification requires an infinite series of reasons then, given our limited ability to summon forth more than, say, three reasons for any belief, it does not look like any human belief will be justified. It is a problem if infinitism entails that humans must have the ability to actually entertain an infinite series of reasons. Klein responds to this objection by noting that beliefs can be construed dispositionally. If so, Klein sees 'no good reason for believing that there is not an infinite series of available, adequate reasons for some propositions' (Klein, 'Why Not?' 206). The infinite series of reasons could be available to you even though you have not yet formed occurrent beliefs in any of them.

I do not share Klein's equanimity regarding our chances. By including explicit mention of degrees of justification, the problem can be solved without relying on the tricky distinction between dispositional and non-dispositional beliefs. No proposition is completely justified for any human, but many propositions are justified to a high degree for most humans, and many propositions are justified to the degree required for knowledge. This, I would argue, is not only all we should realistically want, but also in accord with most of our intuitions on the human capacity for justification. Though we do have the intuition that we know many things, I think we lack the intuition that any proposition is completely justified for us. Even with regard to the propositions that seem most justified, like 'Here is a hand,' 'I have a headache,' and 'There is at least one proposition that is not both true and false,' it seems that further reasons of the right kind would increase the degree to which those propositions are justified. If you found some way to answer the skeptic or came to understand why introspection is supposed to be so reliable or produced a sound argument really explaining why rational insight is so trustworthy — all of these seem like they would raise the degree to which the propositions are justified.



Can your justification for 'I have a headache' really be increased with further reasons? It seems like any further reason you could give for the proposition would constitute, to misuse Bernard Williams's phrase, 'one thought too many.'<sup>27</sup> Surely, when you have a headache, the proposition that you have a headache is already as justified for you as can be.<sup>28</sup>

I do not share this intuition, though I do share the intuition that further reasons are not necessary for the proposition to be justified to a very high degree, nor are further reasons necessary for the proposition to be justified to the degree required for knowledge. However, I also recognize that there are many difficulties with introspection (as well as rational insight and ordinary perception), including difficulties that make fallibility in introspection a somewhat plausible consequence. Given this, it's hard to see why, if you came to have as an adequate reason that, how, and why introspection works and, in particular, that it worked well in this instance, the degree to which 'I have a headache' is justified for you wouldn't increase.

So, I think the argument in this paper has certain advantages over Klein's. In this argument, I have rested a lot on the completeness requirement. I have not, however, offered a great deal of support for the requirement. This is because any plausible denial of the completeness requirement is tantamount to infinitism anyway. The completeness requirement states that a good theory of the structure of justification needs to explain why or show how complete justification makes sense. This requirement will only be legitimate if complete justification does make sense. But if complete justification does make sense, then a theory of the structure of justification that can plausibly explain what complete justification is will be preferable to a theory that cannot.

What if it complete justification doesn't make sense? Then, the completeness requirement will be illegitimate. But infinitism will still be preferable to foundationalism. If complete justification doesn't make sense, then for any degree of justification, there is a higher degree of justification. We have been assuming that, to the extent the degree to which a proposition is justified for you can increase, it can do so in virtue of your coming to have another reason (of the right kind) for it.<sup>29</sup> Either

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27 B. Williams, 'Persons, Character, and Morality,' in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981), 18

28 See A. Plantinga, 'The Prospects for Natural Theology,' *Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion* (1991) 287-315, at 311 for a similar view about the justification for belief in other minds.

29 As indicated earlier (in note 14), it does not matter whether the additional reasons

the reason directly results in an increase in degree of justification, or the reason constitutes understanding of a metajustificatory feature, and the degree of justification thereby increases over and above what it would be in the presence of the metajustificatory feature alone.

If for any degree of justification there is a higher degree of justification, then there will always be a reason such that, were you to have it, the degree of justification would increase. But this is just infinitism. So, whether or not there is a completeness requirement, infinitism is preferable to foundationalism. If there is a completeness requirement, any version of foundationalism that can satisfy the degree requirement cannot satisfy the completeness requirement. If there isn't a completeness requirement, then this must be because complete justification makes no sense; this implies that infinitism is true.

*Received: August 2002*

*Revised: March 2003*

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increase the degree to which the proposition is justified in virtue of increasing the degree to which some metajustificatory feature (like reliability) is exemplified. That is, it doesn't matter if reasons increase the degree to which *p* is justified only in virtue of increasing the reliability of *p*. As long as further reasons can always increase the degree to which *p* is justified, then infinitism is true.