EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION AND LEVELS OF FOUNDATIONAL COHERENCE

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Abstract
This paper examines traditional attempts to develop a plausible theory of epistemic justification of empirical beliefs. The paper finds that these traditional attempts are inadequate because each of them ignores certain fundamental elements involved in the justification of empirical beliefs. Using the method of philosophical analysis, the paper argues that the justification of empirical beliefs depends on various levels of relation between reason and empirical facts. Following from this, the paper argues that both sensation and reasoning are complementary in the justification of empirical beliefs.

Keywords: Foundationalism, Coherentism, Foundational-Coherence, Foundherentism, Epistemic Justification

I   Epistemic Justification and Empirical Knowledge

The debate between foundationalists and coherentists with regards to what constitutes an adequate theory of epistemic justification of beliefs has lingered with no apparent resolution in sight. For foundationalists, the mode of justification of beliefs presents a kind of architectonic model in which beliefs depend on other beliefs in an asymmetrical relation, resting ultimately on some basic beliefs which do not depend on other beliefs themselves(Moore,2008; Chisolm,2008). For coherentists, on the other hand, beliefs exist within a system of mutual justification where all the beliefs have a symmetrical relation to each other. All beliefs are taken to have equal status within the system and any belief is justified to the extent that it is coherent with other beliefs within the system in which it is held (Sellars, 2008; Bonjour, 1978; Davidson, 2008).The need for an acceptable theory of epistemic justification in a proper account of knowledge cannot be overemphasised. The aim of this paper is to propose a plausible theory of epistemic justification of empirical beliefs. Through the method of philosophical analysis, the paper examines the strengths and weaknesses of the major arguments proposed by Foundationalists and Coherentists. The paper also argues for a plausible role of empirical evidence and reason in the justification of beliefs.

Section I of the paper identifies the problem of epistemic justification as one which poses a special challenge for empirical beliefs. Section II examines the foundationalist attempt to address this challenge and some of the objections faced by the foundationalist attempt. Section III also examines the coherentist approach to addressing the challenge, as well as some of the objections to the coherentist proposal. Section IV discusses the role of two major elements (empirical evidence and reason) in the justification of beliefs. The paper concludes by arguing that, given the complementary roles played by reason and empirical evidence in the justification of empirical beliefs, a midway between foundationalism and coherentism presents a more plausible theory of epistemic justification.

The exact relationship between evidence and the justification of knowledge claims is an important issue in epistemological discourse. The extent of the trust we have for any claim or belief depends on the character of evidence we have for such claims. Where the evidence that

warrants a particular belief held by any particular epistemic agent is conclusive, such a belief may be said to be justified. Considering the traditional account of knowledge, and given the satisfaction of the other condition of truthfulness, the belief held by the epistemic agent in question amounts to knowledge. The justification of such claims is owing to the fact that the reasons which serve as the basis for holding such beliefs provides conclusive warrants for the claims which are based on them. Examples of these kinds of beliefs include mathematical and logical claims. The belief that "the square of the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle equals the sum of the square of the other two sides" is warranted by certain mathematical proof. This warrant is such that it is generally believed that the claim itself is justified. The justification of the claim above stems from a particular character of logical and mathematical claims. In the case of mathematical and logical claims, once the proofs are systematically followed, they seem to worth being affirmed as knowledge. Though there are philosophers who have argued that, in some possible worlds, mathematical and logical beliefs may not be taken as absolutely justified as they appear to be. For instance, one may think of a *Cartesian world* in which the evil genius is deceiving an epistemic agent. However, since our *actual* world is characterised by a relation of conclusiveness between logical/mathematical claims and the proofs usually given to back them, the justification of mathematical and logical claims are taken as given.

However, no matter how much of certitude is derived from a logical proof, once there is a slight mixture of empirical content in our reasoning concerning them, that certitude is lost. Determining whether such claims amount to knowledge then becomes a serious puzzle; one with which many epistemologists have battled for a very long time. Let us consider the following simple logical scheme:

$$P \rightarrow P \vee Q$$

The logical scheme above indicates that if an agent is justified in believing that P, such an agent can be said to be justified in believing that P or Q. If I know that 1 is less than 2, I know that 1 is less than 2 or 1 is less than 3. However, once empirical content is brought into the reasoning, the level of confidence in asserting the implication of the original claim diminishes. This is played out in one of the counterexamples presented by Edmund Gettier against the traditional tripartite account of knowledge.

Jones is justified in believing that Henry Fonda owns a ford. On the basis of this, Jones believes that Henry Fonda owns a ford or Brown lives in Barcelona. It turns out that Henry Fonda does not own a ford, but Brown lives in Barcelona. It thus happens that the disjunction "Henry Fonda owns a ford or Brown lives in Barcelona" is true. However, Jones is not justified in believing this disjunction. This suggests that the bulk of the problem about knowledge has to do with empirical knowledge. The question that relevantly follows from this analysis is "How is empirical knowledge possible?" The problem about empirical knowledge consists in the fact that no matter the volume or strength of evidence available to an epistemic agent, or the soundness of the agent's ability to follow logical rules, the agent is never guaranteed the right to be sure of any particular claim with empirical content. In other words, no matter the volume of evidence available, an epistemic agent cannot be guaranteed the certitude required for knowledge.

Owing to this situation, epistemologists have argued that the requirement for certitude cannot be part of the requirements for empirical knowledge. In fact, a good number of philosophers have argued that the failure of traditional epistemology in the search for knowledge is based on this false hope that certitude is attainable. For these critiques of traditional epistemology, certitude is not attainable, and not even necessary, in the justification of empirical beliefs(Sosa, 1980; Van Fraassen, 2000). The impossibility of attaining certitude is a major challenge for traditional theories of epistemic justification. Any theory that insists on a

condition of certitude in justifying empirical beliefs will ultimately lead to scepticism. This is why the foundationalist stands of philosophers such as Rene Descartes (1998), David Hume (1968), Barry Stroud (2008), etc, lead them to sceptical conclusions.

However, this sceptical implication of the traditional theories of epistemic justification is not a sufficient ground for rejecting them absolutely. These theories have been reformulated to avoid the demand for certitude in the justification of beliefs and to help them take care of the uncertain character of empirical knowledge. They are thus reformulated such that they are designed simply to help distinguish cases of knowledge from cases where an agent cannot be said to know.These various attempts at reformulating the theories of epistemic justification have met with a number of cogent objections. This paper proceeds by examining the two major traditional theories of epistemic justification, foundationalism and coherentism, to identify their basic elements as well as objections that have been raised against them. The aim is to see how the debate between these two theories can help develop an acceptable account of justification of empirical knowledge.

II   Foundationalism and its Critiques

Laurence Bonjour (1978, p. 4) classifies foundationalism into two versions, Weak and Strong. This classification of foundationalism into strong and weak versions is adopted in this paperbecause the classification presents a sufficient basis for understanding the basic tenets of foundationalism as a theory of epistemic justification.Strong foundationalism holds that foundational beliefs do not need any other beliefs to justify them. They can be said to be self justifying, or justified by non-epistemic empirical facts. Weak Foundationalism, on the other hand accepts that there are foundational beliefs, but it requires that these foundational beliefs can be built into a system of coherent beliefs(Sosa, p. 16).

In its various formulations, the basic tenet of foundationalism is that the mode of justification of beliefs is by their dependence on other beliefs. In other words, the justification of a belief B is derived from some other belief B_1, the justification of B_1 is derived from B_2. Thus, justification of beliefs proceeds in an architectonic pattern with one belief relying on the other in an *asymmetric* relation. Ernest Sosa presents the metaphor of a pyramid to explain the kind of relation that exists between beliefs within the foundationalist model(Sosa, p. 5). At the base of this foundationalist models are beliefs that are regarded as basic. These basic beliefs enjoy a privileged status over other kinds of beliefs because the mode of justifying the basic beliefs differs from that of other beliefs that justify them. They do not rely on other beliefs for their justification. For some foundationalists, the basic beliefs are self justifying(Chisolm, p. 81). For some others, basic beliefs are not justified by other beliefs, but by non-epistemic properties like perception, memory and inference(Sosa, p. 15).

The basic motivating drive for foundationalism is the attempt to avoid an infinite regress in the process of justification of beliefs. If beliefs are justified by their being inferred from other beliefs, the process of justification will go on with no ultimate justification because every belief will have to be inferred from another belief in an infinite chain of dependence. To avoid this problem, foundationalists maintain that there are non-inferential basic beliefs to serve as terminating nodes in the belief justification process. It is in line with this that Sosa states as follows:

> It [foundationalism] thus opts for foundational beliefs justified in some noninferential way by ruling out a chain or pyramid of justification that has justifiers of justifiers, and so on *without end….*any piece of knowledge must be ultimately founded on beliefs that are not (inferentially) justified or warranted by other beliefs. This is the doctrine of *epistemic foundationalism* (1980, pp. 9-10).

For most foundationalists, these basic beliefs are taken as given because they are apprehended by our contact with the external world. Thus, such beliefs are self justifying because a "person's justification for thinking that he knows it to be true is simply the fact that it is true" (Chisolm, p. 86).This view is also echoed by G. E. Moore(2008), when he states that "there can be no generalisation of epistemic justification for empirical knowledge beyond what is available to the senses through perception and memory. The alternative to this is scepticism" (p. 28).

A number of objections have been raised against the foundationalist model of justification of empirical knowledge. One such objection is highlighted by the tendency of the foundationalist model to lead to scepticism. Basic beliefs rely on noninferential facts for their justification, but our access to these facts is our sense organs. Given the fallibility of our senses, it may follow that the foundationalist model will ultimately imply that knowledge is impossible to attain. In line with this reasoning, Barry Stroud (2008) makes the following claim:

> But if we acknowledge that our sensory experiences are all we ever have to go on in gaining knowledge about the world, and we acknowledge, as we must, that given our experiences as they are, we could nevertheless be simply dreaming of sitting by the fire, we must concede that we do not know that we are sitting by the fire. (p. 21)

This claim by Stroud is modelled after the Cartesian argument that, even though we believe that the senses sometimes give us correct knowledge about the external world, we are aware that the senses sometimes deceive us also. We sometimes have dreams that appear as if they are waking moments. Based on this awareness, there is no means of distinguishing between dream moments and waking moments. As such, there is no way we can rely on the evidence of the senses. Beliefs derived from them cannot thus serve as foundations for knowledge.

Apart from the fact that the sceptical implication of Stroud's arguments is not desirable, his model of foundationalism is restricted by the traditional search for certitude in the attempt to justify our knowledge of the external world. As noted earlier, the search for certitude in the quest for knowledge is no longer popular, so we will not dwell much on the objection posed by such sceptical challenges as presented in Stroud's arguments.

A more cogent objection to foundationalism is presented by Bonjour who identifies three basic elements in the foundationalist characterisation of foundational beliefs. First is the foundational belief, allegedly dependent on non-epistemic empirical fact. Second is the state of affairs or the non-epistemic empirical fact on which the foundational beliefs depend. Third, and finally, is the apprehension of the state of affairs by the epistemic agent. Bonjour identifies a dilemma especially with regards to the agent's apprehension of the state of affairs. The dilemma concerns whether such apprehension is a cognitive event or not. If it is cognitive, then it requires justification itself. If it is not cognitive, then there is no way it can serve as justification for beliefs because beliefs have a cognitive character(Bonjour, p. 11). This objection is echoed by Donald Davidson who maintains that the relation between the alleged foundational beliefs and our sensation of the external world is causal, not logical. This is because beliefs consist of propositional attitudes while sensations are not propositional attitudes. As such, they belong to different logical categories and there is no way that sensations will justify the supposed foundational beliefs(Davidson, p. 127).

A second objection to foundationalism to be considered in this paper is suggested by WilfridSellars. According to Sellars(2008, p. 97), "one could not have observational knowledge of any fact unless one knew many other things as well". Supposing, for instance, that an epistemic agent has a beliefs *B* (say that *the ground is wet*), and his justification for *B*

is the belief B_1 (that rain is falling). The justification for B_1 is the basic belief B_2 that water pebbles are falling from the sky (assuming that some foundationalist would take B_2 as foundational enough). Sellars' point is that acceptance of $B_2$by the epistemic agent depends on the agent's acceptance of certain other beliefs which may include the belief that the agent is not dreaming at the moment when he thinks he is perceiving water pebbles falling from the sky, or that his sense of sight is working well enough to present a correct account of the states of affairs. Thus, Sellars insists that to characterise a state as knowing is not to describe that state, but to place it in a logical space of reasons within which an agent justifies what he believes. If this is correct, then no beliefs can be called foundational because the supposed foundational beliefs are dependent on their relations to certain other beliefs.

If the objections discussed above stand, they suggest that foundationalism is not sufficient to present an account of the justification of knowledge of the external world. In avoiding this problem, two anti-sceptical approaches are available to the epistemologist. First is to accept the basic tenets of foundationalism and attempt to fill the missing gap created by lack of logical connection between facts and beliefs. The other approach is to reject foundationalism in its entirety, adopting in its place a different account of epistemic justification. The latter option is the option favoured by Coherentists. The next section will examine the basic tenets of coherentism, some arguments raised in its favour and some objections against the theory.

III   The Coherentist's Alternative

The perceived failure of foundationalism is a motivation for coherentism. Consider Sellar's objection to foundationalism as discussed above. Following the suggestion that there can be no foundational beliefs, given that the supposedly foundational beliefs cannot be held without recourse to some system involving other beliefs within which the *foundational* beliefs are justified, the primacy of coherence as the justifying factor is pushed to the fore. Thus, the core of the basis of the coherentistclaim is that beliefs are the only things that can justify beliefs. This is the only way in which a belief can stand in a logical relation with the elements that justify the belief.

In his defence of the coherentist principle, Bonjour (1978, p. 5)argues that "the idea of being epistemically responsible is the core of the concept of epistemic justification". This implies that whatever belief is held by an epistemic agent, alleged foundational beliefs inclusive, such beliefs are justified for the epistemic agent only if the agent has reasoned evidence to hold such beliefs. This reasoned evidence cannot be restricted to brute empirical facts because it has an internal relation to the cognitive goal of truth acquisition. In fact, Bonjour's rejection of Externalism is premised on this claim because, for him, the externalist perspective on the justification of knowledge lacks a rational basis for connecting the cognitive state of an epistemic agent's with the external fact that such state represents.

Explaining the logical relation between reason and empirical facts is one of the major challenges facing foundationalists. Coherentism seems to have found a way around this problem. Since beliefs are the things that justify beliefs, the logical connection is clear and the logical gap left open by foundationalism is filled up. But how does coherentism avoid the infinite regress problem which motivates foundationalism? For coherentist, beliefs are woven together in a sort of systemic web. All the beliefs within a system have an equal epistemic status. The hierarchical mode of arranging beliefs in the foundationalist model, according to which some beliefs with a more superior status justify some other beliefs of a more inferior status, is rejected. No belief is superior to another within the system. All beliefs within the system justify each other in a symmetric relation. This relation of justification is circular, but in a non-vicious manner. Perhaps it is premised on the assumption that most of our beliefs are true and as such, each belief is justified by being coherent with the bulk of beliefs that

form our system of beliefs. This point is clear indicated by Davidson (2008) when he states as follows:

> …there is a pretty strong sense in which we can be said to know that there is a presumption in favour of the overall truthfulness of anyone's beliefs, including our own. So it is bootless for someone to ask for some further reassurance; that can only add to his stock of beliefs. All that is needed is that he recognize that belief is in its nature veridical (p. 129).

The above suggests why Sosa represents the coherentist model using the metaphor of a raft. Each belief forms a unit of plank that are intertwined to build the raft and the raft floats because all the units that make it interrelate to strike a balance in the system.

Some objections have also been raised against the coherentist model of justification of empirical knowledge. One of such objections is found in Sosa's claim that coherentism, in the final analysis, is reducible to some form of *Formal Foundationalism*. Sosa's argument is that the underlying presumption of foundationalism is that justification of knowledge supervenes ultimately on non-epistemic factors. According to Sosa, this is what coherentism, in its simplest non-normative form, attempts to achieve. In his words;

> …coherentism explains how epistemic justification supervenes on the non-epistemic in a theory of remarkable simplicity: a belief is justified iff[if and only if] it has a place within a system of beliefs that is coherent and comprehensive (Sosa, 1980, p. 16).

A coherentist may argue against this objection by maintaining that it is an unjustifiable oversimplified account of coherentism. This possible counter-objection leads to yet another problem which has been raised against coherentism. This second objection has to do with how to appropriately characterise the concept of *coherence* as required by coherentists. According to Chisholm (2008), there is no determinate principle to determine when a proposition is coherent with the set of propositions supposedly justifying the proposition(p. 84). This argument is further advanced by Goldman (1980) in his refutation of Internalism when he notes that explanatory coherence has been advanced by some scholars as the goal of cognition. Goldman examines some possible candidate explanations of this concept and concludes that the notion of explanatory coherence is far from being clear(p. 44). If the notion of what it means for a belief to be coherent with a system is unclear, then it is difficult to maintain that such a concept can help to explain the notion of epistemic justification.

Perhaps a stiffer challenge for cohenrentism stems from its relegation of the role of sensation and experience in the account of epistemic justification of empirical knowledge. This seems to stand against the ordinary understanding of the role of experience in the account of knowledge of the external world. It is widely believed among scientists and philosophers of science that scientific explanations proceed by drawing conclusions from observed phenomena. R. M. Harre(1985), for instance, maintains that adequate causal explanations require the discovery of both regular relations between phenomena, and some kind of mechanism that link them. Even Karl Popper's falsifiability thesis maintains that experience play the role of falsifying tentative scientific theories(Popper, 2005, p. 18).If an agent (to use a relatively trivial example) wants to determine the epistemic status of the proposition that *it is raining*, even if it is agreed that he will test the proposition to determine its consistence with some other propositions, it seems that one of the important factors to be considered is the fact of the matter. This fact is presented by the external state of affairs which is accessible through sensation. It does appear, therefore, that sensation has a significant role to perform in

the justification of empirical knowledge. Try as much as they can, coherentist cannot simply wish away that role.

IV   Levels of Foundational Coherence

The foregoing discussion with regards to the two theories of epistemic justification appears to suggest certain important considerations in the attempt to provide accounts of justification of empirical knowledge. According to Susan Haack(2008), the debate between foundationalists and coherentists reveals that some certain elements of the foundationalist theory, as well as certain elements of the coherentist theory, are important in the justification of knowledge. Consequently, Haacksuggests a reconciliation of some coherent elements of both theories, this leads to a theory which she labels foundherentism.

Haack's argument is that epistemic justification is a double aspect affair involving both causal and logical relations. In this regard, evidence has an important role to play in the justification of empirical knowledge. However, there are two kinds of evidence, leading to two kinds of beliefs in the epistemic agent. There is S-evidence which refers to the state of affairs which is causally responsible for the agent's S-belief. However, a particular S-evidence has a propositional representation which serves as the agent's C-evidence. This C-evidence is logically responsible for the agent's formulation of C-belief which represents the agent's S-belief. This implies that there are foundational beliefs which serve as stopping points in the justification of empirical knowledge. These foundational beliefs are derived from the evidence available to the epistemic agent. However, there are also some background beliefs which influence the agent's interpretation of the evidence and the formulation of other beliefs (Haack, p. 138).

This indicates that foundationalism and coherentism should be merged to develop a viable theory of epistemic justification. Thus, Haack rejects both metaphors of the raft and the pyramid as presented by Sosa. She suggests, in their place, a metaphor of a crossword puzzle according to which reasons and evidence interacts to present a mode of justifying empirical knowledge. It is important to note that Haack's reconciliatory attempt is different from Sosa's attempt to reduce coherentism to foundationalism. On Haack's model, both foundational and coherentist elements involved in the formulation of the new theory are essential and one is not reducible to the other.

While harnessing the strengths of foundationalism and coherentism Haack's Foundherentism tries to avoid the major weaknesses of the two traditional accounts. The traditional problem of epistemic regress is avoided because justification terminates with foundational beliefs. Again, the joint role of reasoning and empirical evidence in the acquisition of empirical knowledge is well stressed. The one sided account of traditional foundationalist and coherentist theories have been largely responsible for the failure of both theories. The senses are the windows through which the external world is perceived. However, the senses, in their brute unrefined character, are not sufficient to explain our knowledge of that external world. The possibility of the review of beliefs and truths in scientific explanations is evidence that reasoning also has a significant role to play in justifying empirical knowledge. For instance, the *truth* at some point in the history of scientific explanations of the proposition "Pluto is a planet", and the falsity of the same proposition in contemporary explanations, is aided both by evidence from empirical observation as well as reasoning about those facts which the senses have observed.

In spite of the advancement of Haack'sFoundherentism over foundationalism and coherentism however, the account contains some significant shortcomings. Note that

Haackdoes not claim that hers may be the most acceptable version of the attempt to reconcile the two conflicting theories. In her words:

> Of course, the viability of the foundherentist approach does not depend on my being completely successful in articulating it. No doubt there could be other versions of foundherentism falling within these general contours but differing in details(Haack, 2008, p. 136).

One problem with foundherentism is the presumption, like coherentism, that all beliefs involved in the justification of a particular empirical belief have equal status. Beliefs are likened to words appearing within a particular crossword puzzle. Each word is equally important within the context of the crossword, sharing a mutual relation with other words. This characterisation of the relation of beliefs does not seem to adequately represent the fact of the matter about epistemic justification.

At this point, I will like to present what I think is a plausible account of the nature of epistemic justification. If Jones has a belief, say A, that *Henry Fonda owns a Ford or Brown lives in Barcelona,* Jones' belief that *A* is a product of reasoning about certain evidence available to Jones at the particular point of forming the belief. In other words, there is a foundation upon which *A* is built. This foundation may be another belief, A_1,that *Henry Fonda owns a ford*. *A* is inferred from $A_1$from the application of certain pattern of logical reasoning to the belief A_1.The chain of justification may go on in this manner with A_1 resting on A_2, combined with the application of certain patterns of logical reasoning, for its justification, and so on. At some point, the ultimate justification of this chain of beliefs may then terminate at some basic level where there is an empirical grounding, for instance, that Jones saw Henry pay for a Ford at the dealer's shop. This indicates, as Haack suggests, that causal and logical elements are relevantly involved in the process of epistemic justification. However, it also indicates that *A* and A_1do not have equal status as beliefs. *A*is dependent on A_1in a way in which A_1 is not dependent on *A*.

The termination of epistemic justification in an empirical base does not negate the relevance of reasoning and coherence in the process. The agent's interpretation of the empirical evidence requires the mediation of reasoning and cannot be achieved through brute sensation. What all of these indicate is that the beliefs involved in the process of epistemic justification of beliefs do not have equal status. Some beliefs are more foundational than others and coherentism, or any reconciliatory attempt, cannot simply wish this fact away.

The metaphor of the crossword puzzle presented by Haack does not adequately capture the foregoing explanation of epistemic justification because the metaphor does not reflect the hierarchy of beliefs involved in epistemic justification. An architectonic pattern as suggested by Sosa seems more appropriate. However, the architectonic pattern is more systemic than a pyramid. It is not a metaphor of simple bricks laid on other simple bricks. It appears to be more of pillars built on other levels of pillars where the substance of each pillar consists of a number of interrelated elements fusing together to provide the pillar with the character required to support whatever belief structure is erected on it. This is because at each level, each of the underlying empirical beliefs are reinforced by some other beliefs with which it must be consistent for the belief to be justified. Jones' lack of justification for A_1 can be attributed to the inconsistency of A_1 with some other beliefs like *Henry Fonda hired the Ford he was driving*.

In summary, one can say that there are a number of levels of justification involved in the justification of beliefs. At the basic level, there are brute empirical facts forming a horizontal base. On this horizontal base, certain patterns of reasoning are erected to generate empirical beliefs which serve a secondary horizontal base on which other reasoning patterns are

erected. The structure of justification is then erected in that manner until it reaches the apex of the structure where we find the belief which is being ultimately justified. The figure below gives a pictorial understanding of this account of justification:

Figure 1:   The structure of epistemic justification of beliefs
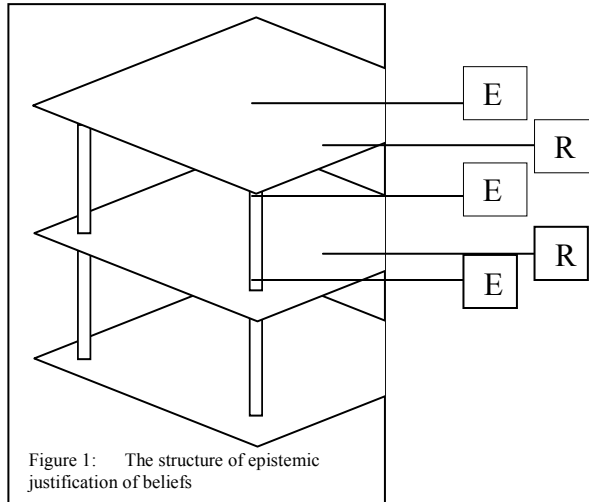
In the figure above, E stands for the level of brute empirical facts which serve as the ultimate foundation for justification of beliefs. E^1, E^2 …E^n represent various levels of empirical beliefs formed on the basis of E. R, R^1…R^n represent various levels of reasoning involved in the process of justification. One major role of reasoning in the process is to ensure that beliefs formed in the process are coherent. This shows that justifying a belief involves both empirical and logical elements.

V   Conclusion

The foregoing arguments reveal that the problem of justifying empirical beliefs is not adequately addressed by the traditional theories of epistemic justification. Each of the traditional theories focuses on one, out of the two, elements that are involved in the justification of empirical beliefs. An adequate account of epistemic justification should account for the role of empirical evidence and reason the justification of empirical beliefs.

However, the arguments in this paper suggest that, given the complementary roles played by reason and empirical evidence in the justification of empirical beliefs, a midway between foundationalism and coherentism presents a more plausible account of epistemic justification. This alternative is presented as one in which beliefs are justified in an architectonic structure where empirical evidence and reason work together at various levels to justify certain beliefs. At the horizontal base of this structure are brute empirical facts while reason, standing on a vertical plane over brute empirical facts, help to generate coherent empirical beliefs on the next horizontal level. Reason again stands on the empirical beliefs on the next level to generate further levels as the pictorial explanation in Figure 1 shows.

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