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**Benign Infinity<sup>1</sup>**

**Three Types of Regress**

According to Peter Klein, infinitism is the correct solution to the regress problem.<sup>2</sup> The problem arises when we consider an inferentially justified belief,  $B_1$ , and ask how its justification comes about. Since  $B_1$  is inferentially justified, it received its justification from another belief,  $B_2$ . But only justified beliefs can transmit justification via inference to other beliefs. So, if  $B_1$  receives its justification from  $B_2$ , then  $B_2$  is justified in turn. Unless  $B_2$  is justified non-inferentially, its justification comes from a third belief,  $B_3$ . Unless  $B_3$  is justified non-inferentially, its justification comes from a still further belief, and so forth. About the chain of beliefs on which  $B_1$ 's justification rests, there are the following options:

- (i) it terminates in an unjustified belief;
- (ii) it terminates in a non-inferentially justified belief;
- (iii) forming a circle, it loops back to  $B_1$ ;
- (iv) it continues *ad infinitum*.

Each of these options is puzzling: (i) because it seems impossible for a belief's justification to come ultimately from an unjustified belief; (ii) because non-inferential justification is mysterious; (iii) because it seems impossible that a belief can receive its justification ultimately from itself, even if there are many intermediate links, and (iv) because it's hard to see how finite minds cannot help themselves to infinite chains of reasons. The problem is that, if indeed each of options (i)-(iv) is unacceptable, then the allegedly justified belief we started out with turns out to be unjustified.

Deservedly, option (i) has received little support, if any. Foundationalists recommend option (ii) and coherentists option (iii). Klein defends infinitism on the ground that neither foundationalism nor coherentism can solve the regress problem. I will focus on Klein's rejection of foundationalism and argue that it doesn't succeed. I will also argue in favor of a certain kind of infinitism. Initially, it seems that foundationalism and infinitism are incompatible. However, the appearance of incompatibility disappears when we recognize that there are three different types of regress. The correct response to one of them need not be the correct response to the other ones. First, there is the *doxastic* regress: it consists solely of an initial, inferentially justified belief  $B_1$  and the further beliefs,  $B_2 \dots B_n$ , from which  $B_1$  is inferred. Here is an example of a two-step doxastic regress:

$B_1$     The dog ate my cookie.

$B_{2-4}$     The dog is on the couch & looks guilty & my cookie is gone.

Beliefs  $B_2$ - $B_4$  are the premise beliefs from which  $B_1$  is inferred. The regress is doxastic because it consists solely of beliefs

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<sup>1</sup> In *Themes from Klein*, edited by Branden Fitelson, Rodrigo Borges, and Cherie Braden. Springer: Synthese Library Volume 404: pp. 235-257.

<sup>2</sup> See Klein 1999, 2010, 2014a and 2014b. See also Ginet 2014a and 2014b.

Second, there is what we may call the *evidential* regress. If we reject the circle-of-beliefs thesis and agree that beliefs are not the only things that can be reasons or evidence, then we will allow for two kinds of reasons: doxastic and non-doxastic.<sup>3</sup> Non-doxastic reasons are perceptual, introspective, memorial, and intuitional experiences or seemings.<sup>4</sup> The example of a doxastic regress above turns into an evidential regress when we add the perceptual experiences that may be viewed as the reasons that justify beliefs 2-4:

E<sub>1-3</sub> Visual experiences with the content that the dog is on the couch, looks guilty, and that the plate that had my cookie on it is now empty.

Unlike the previous doxastic regress, this enlarged regress includes both beliefs and visual experiences.

Finally, there is what we may call the *argumentative* regress. Whereas an evidential regress consists of a series of reasons a subject *has*, an argumentative regress is made up of reasons a subject *gives* to defend a belief that's been challenged. Obviously, in ordinary cases, there is nothing argumentative about the other two types of regress, which merely trace where, whenever a belief is justified, its justification comes from. An argumentative regress arises only when a subject engages in a certain social activity—that of giving reasons—in response to a request for providing a justification. I will argue that, whereas foundationalism is correct about the doxastic and the evidential regress, infinitism is correct about the argumentative regress.<sup>5</sup>

### **Basic Beliefs**

To assess whether foundationalism is a successful solution to any of the three regress types mentioned above, we had better take a closer look at what kind of a view foundationalism is supposed to be. Here is a textbook version of it. According to foundationalism, all inferentially justified beliefs owe their justification to a foundation of basic beliefs that receive their justification not from any further beliefs but instead from experiences.<sup>6</sup> According to foundationalism thus understood—*experiential* foundationalism, as we might call it—basic beliefs can be defined as follows:

A belief B is basic iff (i) B is justified; (ii) B does not depend for its justification on any other beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Davidson 1983, p. 426. Davidson claims that “nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief. Its partisan rejects as unintelligible the request for a ground or source of justification of another ilk.” For discussion, see Pryor 2014, p. 206ff, and Steup 1996, p. 140f.

<sup>4</sup> An experience or seeming that p is a reason for believing that p because it has the same content as the belief, namely p, and because it asserts its content assertively, as compared with, for example, imagining that p or wishing that p. See Huemer 2001, p. 99f. Why think that experiences can terminate the regress? They can do so because they can *confer* justification without *needing* any justification themselves. See Steup 1996, chapter 7.

<sup>5</sup> The distinction between the doxastic and the evidential regress on the one hand, and the argumentative regress on the other hand, is closely related to Alston's distinction between a belief's property of being justified and the activity of justifying a belief. See Alston 1989, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> For examples of this type of view, see Audi 1993, Chisholm 1966, Feldman 2003, p. 70ff, Pollock 1986 chapter 2, Huemer 2001 chapter 5, and Pryor 2000. For a recent collection of essays discussing experiential foundationalism, see Tucker 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Feldman 2003, p. 50, defines basic beliefs as beliefs that are “justified but . . . not on the basis of any other beliefs.”

Advocates of experiential foundationalism must explain how it's possible for an experience to justify a belief. I will address this issue further below. They must also respond to Laurence Bonjour's well-known argument for the conclusion that there aren't any basic beliefs.<sup>8</sup> Since this argument is closely related to Klein's argument for infinitism, it will be fruitful to examine it. I will follow Richard Feldman's clear presentation of it, and I will also follow Klein in introducing a scenario involving two protagonists: foundationalist Fred and Doris the doubter.<sup>9</sup> Fred, let us suppose, believes

$B_{ATE.IT}$  The dog ate my cookie.

Doris challenges Fred to explain why he thinks that  $B_{ATE.IT}$  is justified. Fred responds by saying that he inferred  $B_{ATE.IT}$  from three other propositions he believes: the dog is on the couch, looks guilty, and the plate that had his cookie on it is now empty. Suppose Doris selects the first of these beliefs for further questioning and asks Fred why he thinks that

$B_{DOG}$  The dog is on the couch,  
is justified.<sup>10</sup> He replies that  $B_{DOG}$  is basic; it is justified not by further beliefs but instead solely by:

$E_{Dog}$  A visual experience with the content that the dog is on the couch.

At this point, Bonjour's argument against basic beliefs kicks in. The key thought of his argument is that it's not possible for  $E_{Dog}$  by itself to justify  $B_{DOG}$ . A justificatory contribution from further beliefs is needed.

### **BonJour's Argument Against Basic Beliefs**

BonJour's argument can be construed a sequence of two arguments. The first rests on the thought that, from the point of view of the subject, justification must be a path to truth: a belief is justified if, and only if, given what the subject has to go on, the belief is probably true (i.e. the probability of its being true is greater than .5).<sup>11</sup> So, if Fred claims that  $B_{DOG}$  is justified in the basic way—that is, without owing its justification to any other beliefs—he must argue that  $B_{DOG}$  has a certain truth-indicative property,  $P$ , by virtue of which this belief is probably true. The pattern for such an argument is as follows:

#### **The TIP Argument**

- (1)  $B_{DOG}$  has a truth-indicative property  $P$ .
- (2) Beliefs having property  $P$  are probably true.

Therefore:

- (3)  $B_{DOG}$  is probably true.

The second argument is based on the thought that, since justification is supposed to be a path to truth, having a justified belief requires having a TIP argument. A TIP argument provides what

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<sup>8</sup> See Bonjour 1985, p. 30f.

<sup>9</sup> See Feldman 2003, p. 75f and Klein 2014a, p. 276.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, she could instead have chosen one of the other two premise beliefs, or asked Fred to justify all three. I'll focus on  $B_{DOG}$ , which is why I didn't introduce 'B\_GUILTY' and 'B\_EMPTY' as names for Fred's other two premise beliefs.

<sup>11</sup> See Bonjour 1985, p. 8. Bonjour says that a justified belief is one that is highly likely true, but this claim conflicts with the rather basic point that justification comes in degrees, which is to say that a belief can be justified—albeit to a low degree—if the subject's reasons make it somewhat likely that it is true.

we may call a 'meta-justification'. Fred tells Doris the reason that justifies  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ . At this point, as Klein puts it, Doris *goes meta* and ask Fred why he thinks that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ .<sup>12</sup> In response, Fred might argue that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  has the property of being a clear and vivid visual experience, and beliefs based on experiences having that property are probably true. According to BonJour's argument, if Fred provides such a meta-justification for his claim that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , he admits that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is in fact not basic. BonJour's second argument, then, runs thus:

**BonJour's Meta-Justification Argument Against Basic Beliefs**

(4) All justification requires having a TIP argument.

(5) If (4) is true, then  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is not basic.

Therefore:

(6)  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is not basic.

Since BonJour's meta-justification argument can be applied to any putatively basic belief, we get the general conclusion that basic beliefs are impossible. The key thought on which BonJour's argument is based is what we may call:

**The Principle of Meta-Justification**

There is no justification without meta-justification.

Klein, too, endorses the principle of meta-justification, though not in quite the same way as BonJour does. Next, I'll turn to Klein's rejection of foundationalism, and then I'll defend foundationalism against both BonJour and Klein.

**Klein's Rejection of Foundationalism**

Klein bases his rejection of foundationalism on the dialectic that ensues in the dialogue between Doris and Fred. Essentially, his argument mirrors BonJour's: when Doris goes meta, Fred must accede to her demand for meta-justification and therefore give up his claim that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is basic, thus abandoning foundationalism.<sup>13</sup> Doris goes meta when Fred asserts that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ . She asks Fred why he thinks that basing  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  on  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is truth-conducive. In other words, she wants to know from Fred whether  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  has a property that makes it probable that B is true. As an experiential foundationalist, Fred will answer Doris's question by offering the following meta-justification:

MJ  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  has the property of being a clear and vivid visual experience, and beliefs based on such experiences are probably true.<sup>14</sup>

In response to Doris's request for a meta-justification, Klein says, Fred faces a trilemma. He has three options: (i) assert MJ, (ii) deny MJ, and (iii) suspend judgment about MJ. Options (ii) and (iii) are bad. If Fred were to exercise either one of them, he would in effect be saying that he takes  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  to be a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  although he has no justification at all for thinking that basing

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<sup>12</sup> See Klein 2014a, p. 277.

<sup>13</sup> Klein 2014a, p. 276f.

<sup>14</sup> Like BonJour, Klein argues that, if a belief is basic, it must have a special property because of which it is likely to be true. See Klein 2014a, p. 276f. He does not, however, focus on a specific instance of that property. In exploring what transpires when Fred responds to Doris request for meta-justification, I let Fred respond as I think he should, namely by offering what I consider a plausible candidate for the special property in question:  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ 's being a visual experience that is clear and vivid.

$B_{\text{DOG}}$  on  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is truth-conducive. That looks like a break-down of epistemic rationality. Hence Klein dismisses options (ii) and (iii), taking them to induce a kind of arbitrariness that's incompatible with the assumption that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is indeed a justified belief. I think Klein is clearly right about that.

So, unless Fred is prepared to abandon his claim that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is his reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , he had better exercise option (i) and assert MJ. However, Klein argues, if Fred exercises option (i), he must then retract his claim that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is basic. Next, I will argue that neither BonJour's nor Klein's attempted refutation of foundationalism succeeds.

### **Foundationalism Defended**

As I mentioned above, BonJour's anti-foundationalist argument is based on the principle of meta-justification: there is no justification without meta-justification. It's important to see that there are two ways to understand this principle. The first is doxastic, and that's the reading BonJour has in mind:

#### **The Principle of Doxastic Meta-Justification (DMJ)**

There is no justification without *beliefs* providing meta-justification.

If DMJ is true, then basic beliefs are indeed impossible. Hence, to defend foundationalism at BonJour's argument, DMJ must be rejected. And rejecting it is well-advised since DMJ is a recipe for radical skepticism. First, since meta-justificatory beliefs must themselves be justified, it generates the consequence that justification requires an infinite number of beliefs.<sup>15</sup> Second, in ordinary situations, people just don't have any meta-justificatory beliefs.<sup>16</sup> So, if DMJ were true, then ordinary perceptual beliefs would be unjustified. That is why BonJour's argument doesn't amount to a plausible challenge to foundationalists. Consider the first premise of his argument:

(4) All justification requires having a TIP argument.

BonJour insists on the following strong reading of (4):

(4a) All justification requires *believing* the premises of a TIP argument.

If (4) must be understood as (4a), then

(5) If (4a) is true, then  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is not basic.

is clearly true. However, for the reasons mentioned above, (4a) is not plausible.<sup>17</sup> Now, it might be thought that, when foundationalists reject (4a), they must insist that justification does not require meta-justification in any form. But that thought would be a mistake. There is an interpretation of the principle of meta-justification that allows for the existence of basic beliefs, namely:

#### **The Principle of Evidential Meta-Justification (EMJ)**

There is no justification without *evidence* providing meta-justification.

Accordingly, (4) can be read alternatively as:

(4b) All justification requires *evidence* for the premises of a TIP argument.

If premise (4) is understood as (4b), the next premise must be:

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<sup>15</sup> For the infinite mind objection, see Audi 1993, pp. 127-128, Huemer's essay in this volume, and Klein 2014a, p. 281.

<sup>16</sup> See Ginet 2014a, p. 287.

<sup>17</sup> See Feldman 2003, p. 77.

(5b) If (4b) is true, then  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is not basic.

But (5b) is false. If the needed evidence for the TIP argument comes solely in the form of perceptual, introspective, memorial, and intuitional experiences, Fred's meta-justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  doesn't involve any beliefs and thus is compatible with  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ 's being basic. EMJ, therefore, poses no threat to the foundationalist claim that inferentially justified beliefs receive their justification ultimately from basic beliefs.

Next, I will respond to Klein's rejection of foundationalism. Like BonJour's, it can be seen as a sequence of two arguments. The first is Klein's trilemma argument: if Fred wants to avoid unacceptable arbitrariness, he must oblige Doris's demand for a meta-justification and explain why he takes  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  to be truth-conducive. According to the second argument, defending the truth-conduciveness of  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is incompatible with  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ 's being basic:

**Klein's Meta-Justification Argument Against Basic Beliefs**

(1) Fred asserts MJ:  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  has the property of being a clear and vivid visual experience, and beliefs based on such experiences are probably true.

(2) If Fred asserts MJ, then  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is not basic.

Therefore:

(3)  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is not basic.

Why think that (2) is true? Klein might say that, by asserting MJ, Fred concedes that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is in part justified by three additional beliefs: (i)  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , (ii)  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience, and (iii) clear and vivid visual experiences are truth-conducive. Now, it would indeed be odd of Fred to tell Doris that, even though he responds to her request for a meta-justification by offering (i)-(iii), he doesn't really believe these propositions. Here, Klein's trilemma argument applies. If Fred didn't believe (i)-(iii), he would be guilty of an unacceptable kind of epistemic irrationality. However, from the fact that Fred believes (i)-(iii) *after* Doris's request for a meta-justification, it doesn't follow that he already had these beliefs *before* Doris's request. Let's distinguish between two times:  $t_{\text{before}}$  and  $t_{\text{after}}$ . The former is the time-period between the formation of  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  and Doris's request for a meta-justification. The latter is the period during which the dialogue takes place. At  $t_{\text{before}}$ , Fred did not yet have the meta-justificatory beliefs (i)-(iii). So, Fred can reasonably claim that, at  $t_{\text{before}}$ ,  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  was basic: justified without receiving its justification from any further beliefs. Hence, even if Klein succeeded in showing that, at  $t_{\text{after}}$ ,  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  isn't basic, his argument wouldn't show that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  wasn't basic at  $t_{\text{before}}$ .<sup>18</sup>

Alternatively, Klein might defend premise (2) by endorsing the evidentialist reading of the principle of meta-justification. He might argue that, when Fred asserts MJ, he admits that, in addition to  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ , he has further reasons—not beliefs but experiences—from which his justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  derives. If that is what Klein were to say, I would be in fundamental agreement with him. However, from the premise that

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<sup>18</sup> It is not obvious that that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  isn't basic even at  $t_{\text{after}}$ . Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  does not *depend* on providing Doris, or anybody for that matter, with an argument for why  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ . Hence, if foundationalists define basic beliefs in the way I have in this paper,  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  remains basic even after Fred has provided Doris with a meta-justification for it.

Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  doesn't come from  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  alone but derives from additional perceptual, introspective, memorial, and intuitional experiences we don't get the conclusion that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  isn't basic. We get that conclusion only if the need for meta-justification requires at least one meta-justificatory belief. The evidential reading of the principle of meta-justification doesn't require any such belief. Appealing to EMJ is not, therefore, an effective way of arguing against the possibility of basic beliefs.

Although I do not think Klein's reasoning against foundationalism succeeds, I nevertheless think it supports an important and rather significant conclusion. What the dialogue between Doris and Fred shows is that the need for meta-justification is not easily dismissed. In other words, Klein's argument provides strong support for EMJ: the evidential interpretation of the principle that there is no justification without meta-justification. But if EMJ is true, then what follows isn't that foundationalism is wrong. Rather, what then follows is that *dogmatic* foundationalism is wrong.

### **Meta-Justification and Dogmatic Foundationalism**

Michael Huemer and Jim Pryor have defended versions of foundationalism that are versions of a view that is now called *dogmatism*.<sup>19</sup> According to this view, having an experience as of  $p$  is sufficient for having defeasible justification for believing  $p$ .<sup>20</sup> Having a meta-justification—a reason for thinking that the experience as of  $p$  is a reason for believing  $p$ —is not needed. The hallmark of dogmatic foundationalism, then, is the rejection of the principle of meta-justification in any form. About Fred's belief that the dog is on the couch, dogmatists would say that what confers justification on  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is one and only one thing:  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ . When responding to Doris's request for a meta-justification, Fred might assert

MJ  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  has the property of being a vivid and clear visual experience, and beliefs based on such experiences are probably true.

But, dogmatists would say, Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  depends neither on his believing MJ, nor on his having evidence for MJ in the form of additional perceptual, introspective, memorial, or intuitional experiences.<sup>21</sup>

Klein's objection to foundationalism is based on the premise that, if Fred doesn't accede to Doris's demand for a meta-justification, the result is a kind of arbitrariness that is inconsistent

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<sup>19</sup> See Pryor 2000 and Huemer 2001. Huemer calls his view 'phenomenal conservatism', but it is essentially the same view Pryor defends. In the Klein-Ginet debate on infinitism, Ginet too defends dogmatic foundationalism. See Ginet 2014a, p. 285f.

<sup>20</sup> For a proper understanding of this claim, it is essential to bear in mind the difference between propositional and doxastic justification. The claim is not, using the example of Fred's belief, that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is sufficient for Fred's belief to be justified. Rather, the claim is that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is sufficient for Fred to have justification for believing that the dog is on the couch. If  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is defeated (perhaps because Fred knows he has a brain lesion causing frequent dog hallucinations), then, according to dogmatic foundationalism, Fred has justification for believing the dog is on the couch while, at the same time, if Fred were to believe the dog is on the couch, his belief would not be justified. Here are two passages showing that, according to Huemer and Pryor, an experience as of  $p$  is sufficient for having defeasible justification for believing  $p$ . Huemer: "If it seems to  $S$  as if  $P$ , then  $S$  thereby has at least prima facie justification for believing that  $P$ ." (2001, p. 99.) Pryor: "My view is that whenever you have an experience as of  $p$ , you thereby have immediate *prima facie* justification for believing  $p$ ." (Pryor 2000, p. 536).

<sup>21</sup> See Ginet 2014a, p. 296.

with Fred's claim that, as a justified belief,  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is probably true. Now, while none of Klein's arguments suggest that he endorses the doxastic reading of the principle of meta-justification, DMJ, his argument against foundationalism clearly indicates that he accepts the evidential version of the principle: EMJ. This principle delivers exactly what Klein demands: If  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is indeed justified, then Fred has evidence available to him—in the form of suitable experiences—to which, when Doris goes meta, he can appeal to justify his claim that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ . According to dogmatic foundationalism, Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  doesn't require such evidence. If Klein is right and Fred's belief isn't justified unless Fred has available to him reasons for the meta-justification Doris demands, then dogmatic foundationalism is mistaken. So, Klein's argument against foundationalism is really an argument against dogmatic foundationalism. And on this score, I find myself in complete agreement with him. I think Klein is right in insisting that first-order justification requires the possession of reasons that a subject can appeal to when, in a dialogue like the one between Fred and Doris, a meta-justification is requested. And I do not think Klein would want to insist that this requirement is doxastic: that first-order justification requires meta-justificatory beliefs. It seems to me, therefore, that Klein should reject dogmatic foundationalism, but not non-dogmatic foundationalism.

Oddly, in responding to Ginet's claim that a visual experience can by itself justify the corresponding visual belief, Klein appears to concede as much, in effect endorsing dogmatic foundationalism.<sup>22</sup> Klein agrees with Ginet that visual experience can confer some degree of autonomous justification for the corresponding visual belief. My response to this concession is twofold. First, I think Klein is right in accepting that visual experience can be a source of justification, for otherwise he'd be endorsing the highly problematic circle-of-belief thesis. Second, I do not think he should agree that a visual experience can be a source of at least some degree of *autonomous* justification. By 'autonomous' justification, Klein means the kind of justification for a visual belief that does not require reasons for thinking that the visual experience makes the visual belief probable. His response to Ginet is that the infinitist does not deny the possibility of autonomous justification, but instead insist that a subject has stronger justification for a visual belief if she has reasons for the truth-conduciveness of the corresponding visual experience. It seems to me this response gives up too much. It concedes that infinitism is correct only as an account of how to increase already existing justification that is in no need of meta-justification at all. This is an odd concession because it conflicts with the basic point that, if  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is justified, then Fred must possess whatever evidence is needed for meeting Doris's demand for meta-justification.

I suppose the motivation for Klein's concession arises from the need to respond to the finite mind objection to infinitism. If infinitism is the view that Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  requires an infinite number of reasons in support of Fred's belief, then infinitism conflicts with the fact that Fred's mind is finite and therefore incapable of holding an infinite number of reasons. To avoid this conflict, Klein says infinitism demands merely the *availability* of an infinite number of reasons.<sup>23</sup> But what does availability amount to? The challenge is obvious: if construed too stringently, infinitism succumbs to the finite mind objection; if construed too loosely, it's difficult

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<sup>22</sup> See Ginet 2014a, p. 285f, and Klein 2014b, p. 292.

<sup>23</sup> Klein 2014a, p. 279.



to see why meta-justificatory reasons are necessary at all. Klein sheds some light on the meaning of 'available' by saying that, for reasons to be available at a given time  $t$ , they "must be appropriately "hooked up" to  $S$ 's beliefs and other mental contents at  $t$ ," and he emphasizes that, for a reason to be available in this sense, it needn't be an occurrently held belief.<sup>24</sup> However, are the meta-reasons that Klein thinks justification requires—that is, the reasons Fred needs if he is to meet Doris's demand for a meta-justification—available to Fred if he has no evidence at all for taking  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  to be truth-conducive? I think not.

There is one and only one way in which the needed reasons are available to Fred: before the conversation with Doris begins, he must already be in possession of evidence for the truth-conduciveness of clear and vivid visual experiences. If Klein agrees with this, he should deny that visual experiences can confer any degree of autonomous justification.

### **Infinitism, Inference, and the Creation Problem**

Klein defends infinitism by arguing that non-inferential justification—a belief's being basic—is impossible. Hence, Carl Ginet points out, infinitism as defended by Klein is the view that all justification is inferential.<sup>25</sup> Klein agrees.<sup>26</sup> However, I do not think that, qua being an *infinitist*, Klein is committed to the claim that non-inferential justification is impossible. Suppose Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  does indeed come from a large set of experiential states that originate in perception, introspection, memory, and intuition. Let's suppose this series is at least potentially infinite. Each time Fred attempts to give a reason in response to Doris's recurring requests for justification, a new experiential state is formed and supplies Fred with a further reason. Suppose, if Fred were a being with an infinite amount of time and patience, he could go on forever obliging Doris with further reasons. Would it follow that all justification is inferential? It doesn't seem to me it would.

Consider again Fred's belief at  $t_{\text{before}}$ . If infinitism as just outlined is correct, then Fred's justification at  $t_{\text{before}}$  for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  comes from a finite set of experiences to which Fred, if he had an infinite amount of time, could add infinitely many further experiences.<sup>27</sup> Why should we think that, because of that possibility, Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  at  $t_{\text{before}}$  is inferential? From the fact that, at  $t_{\text{before}}$ , Fred has reasons for the premises of (perhaps infinitely many) meta-justificatory arguments, it doesn't follow that, at  $t_{\text{before}}$ , he has silently rehearsed or verbally articulated any of these arguments. It's one thing to have reasons for the premises of meta-justificatory arguments, and it's another to articulate these arguments and infer their conclusions. While Fred offers some such arguments at  $t_{\text{after}}$ , he entertained none at  $t_{\text{before}}$ . At that time, his justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  was not the result of inference. Hence, even if infinitism were true, it wouldn't follow that all justification is inferential.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ginet 2014a, p. 284.

<sup>26</sup> Klein 2014b, p. 294. In his 2010, p. 161, Klein says: "In other words, infinitism holds that all propositional knowledge is inferential."

<sup>27</sup> At each of these times, the number of his experiences would still be finite. And, we might add, the number of Fred's presently occurring experiential states might not swell excessively because, with the passage of time, some previously held experiential states will no longer obtain.

<sup>28</sup> It might be objected that Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is inferential because it involves premises for a series of TIP arguments. This objection would be based on an odd understanding of 'inferential'. If  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is

I have argued that infinitism doesn't entail that all justification is inferential. Nevertheless, Klein claims it does. On behalf of foundationalism, Ginet points out that, citing Jonathan Dancy, if all justification is indeed inferential, then justification is impossible because inference does not create justification. It merely transfers it.<sup>29</sup> Klein replies that justification emerges "when the set of propositions that are appropriately adduced as reasons expands."<sup>30</sup> The thought is that justification begins emerging when the number of inferences has reached critical mass, and that its degree increases the more inferences are piled onto each other. Here I agree with Ginet and Dancy. I can't find any plausibility in the claim that justification emerges from inferences alone, provided there are enough of them. If all justification were indeed inferential, then it would be utterly unclear where Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  comes from at  $t_{\text{before}}$ , because at that time he hasn't yet made any inferences that bear on the justification of his belief that the dog is on the couch.

Can Klein remain an infinitist but allow for the possibility of non-inferential justification? I have argued that he can. His primary commitment, I take it, is to the principle of evidential meta-justification. When Doris demands from Fred a reason for thinking that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , she is asking a legitimate question, and it would be irrational of Fred to say he can't or won't answer it. But, as I have argued above, advocating the principle of evidential meta-justification is compatible with  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ 's being basic or non-inferentially justified. What it is not compatible with it is *dogmatic* foundationalism, according to which  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  alone justifies  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ . Now, according to *non-dogmatic* foundationalism, how is Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  created? In a nutshell, it is created by reasons for taking  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  to be a reliable or trustworthy belief source—put differently, by reasons for believing that basing  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  on  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a truth-conducive way of forming a belief. This, it seems to me, is the correct answer to the question of how justification is created.<sup>31</sup> It seems to me as well that this answer is compatible with infinitism. What matters is the content of the reasons, not how many there are. If we are to have justification for our beliefs, our reasons must include reasons for the truth-conduciveness of our belief sources. Reasons of this kind create justification for our beliefs. Whether their number is finite or infinite doesn't matter in this regard.

### **Infinity and the Argumentative Regress**

Since Klein thinks neither foundationalism nor coherentism are viable solutions to the regress problem, he recommends infinitism as the only workable solution. However, exactly which type of regress—the doxastic, evidential, or argumentative—is supposed to be infinite? Clearly not the first. Klein, I take it, would readily agree that finite minds cannot have an infinite number of beliefs. When people infer one belief from one or more further beliefs, the set of beliefs this regress consists of is finite, not infinite.

Suppose non-dogmatic foundationalism is correct. Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  comes from  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  and additional experiential states that are Fred's reasons for taking  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  to be truth-

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justified without being inferred from at least one other belief, then I don't think there is a basis for claiming its justification is inferential.

<sup>29</sup> See Ginet 2014a, p. 290 and Dancy 1985, p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> Klein 2014b, p. 294.

<sup>31</sup> For a defense of this view, see Steup 2004 and Steup forthcoming.

conducive. Is it plausible to claim that Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  comes from an infinite set of such states? I think what applies to beliefs applies to experiences as well. At a given time, subjects don't have an infinite set of experiential states. But when, prompted by Doris's request for a meta-justification, Fred starts contemplating what might justify him in believing that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , then, Klein might argue, a new experiential state might arise each time Fred moves along a further step in the regress of giving reasons. The number of such potential experiential states might in principle be infinite. I will explore this possibility further below.

Now consider the argumentative regress. In practice, it cannot be infinite. Sooner or later other pressing matters, like getting a good night's sleep, will put a stop to Fred's attempts to oblige Doris. Klein might reply that, if we have access to a potentially infinite amount of meta-justificatory reasons, then, if Fred and Doris were beings with an infinite amount of time, they could carry on their dialogue forever. And this seems to follow from two premises to which Klein appeals and which I myself find rather plausible:

- P1 Each time Fred supplies Doris with a further reason, it is legitimate for Doris to ask Fred what it is that justifies him in asserting this reason.
- P2 Each time Doris asks Fred to justify the reason he just offered, it would be irrational for Fred—inconsistent with his starting point that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is justified—to reply that he doesn't have a reason.

If P1 and P2 are true, then the conclusion that at the argumentative regress is indeed infinite, at least in principle, seems inescapable.

Of course, in the practice, the activity of reason giving is bound to come to an end eventually. But that's consistent with the main point: if P1 and P2 are correct, then the argumentative regress could go on forever at least in principle. Ginet demurs. He says it's one thing to claim that there is an at least in principle available infinite series of reasons, and it's another thing to give an example of such a regress or at least an algorithm for generating one.<sup>32</sup> Ginet's request for an example or an algorithm is fair. In the next section, I'll attempt to spell out what's going on when, after Doris went meta, the dialogue between her and Fred continues for some distance.

### **The Introspective Track**

Let us review what ensues when Doris goes meta. Fred claims his reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ . Doris makes the meta move by asking Fred why he thinks  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , or, put differently, why he thinks that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  makes it likely that  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is true. Fred replies that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  has the following property: it is a clear and vivid visual experience. In effect, he offers a TIP Argument:

#### **A1**

- (1)  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  originates in  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ : a clear and vivid visual experience.
- (2) Visual experiences of this type are reliable.

Therefore:

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<sup>32</sup> See Ginet 2014a, p. 290. He writes: "To make it plausible that there actually occur justifications having the endlessly ramifying structure that infinitism says all justifications must have, the infinitist must provide representative examples of particular such structures possessed by cognitively normal human subjects, examples about which it would be credible that cases essentially like them actually occur."

- (3)  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is probably true.

Doris can now choose between three different tracks of moving the regress forward: She can ask Fred for a reason in support of (1), for a reason in support of (2), and finally for a reason in support of why Fred thinks that that (3) follows from (1) and (2). I will discuss the first two of these.<sup>33</sup>

If Doris asks Fred to justify premise (1) of A1, she starts the *introspective track*. Fred will respond by offering a second TIP argument:

**A<sub>IN1</sub>**

- (1) I am, in a way that's clear and vivid, introspectively aware that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience.<sup>34</sup>
- (2) Introspective experiences of this type are reliable.

Therefore:

- (3) It's highly likely that premise (1) of A1 is true.

Suppose Doris next asks Fred to justify premise (1) of A<sub>IN1</sub>. Since Fred knows this premise through introspection, he will offer an argument that repeats the reasoning of A<sub>IN1</sub>:

**A<sub>IN2</sub>**

- (1) My reason for (1) of A<sub>IN1</sub> is clear and vivid introspection.
- (2) Introspective experiences of this type are reliable.

Therefore:

- (3) Premise (1) of A<sub>IN1</sub> is probably true.

Suppose Doris carries on and says to Fred: "You just presented me with a new argument: A<sub>IN2</sub>. This argument has two premises each of which requires a reason. Please give me your reason for the first premise of A<sub>IN2</sub>." Well, what is Fred's reason for claiming he knows through introspection that his knowledge of what is visual experience is like originates in introspection? There is only one thing Fred can say, namely: "I know this through introspection." Hence, to defend premise (1) of A<sub>IN2</sub>, he will offer this argument:

**A<sub>IN3</sub>**

- (1) My reason for (1) of A<sub>IN2</sub> is clear and vivid introspection.
- (2) Introspective experiences of this type are reliable.

Therefore:

- (3) Premise (1) of A<sub>IN2</sub> is probably true.

A<sub>IN2</sub> and A<sub>IN3</sub> are identical except for one difference: the first premise of A<sub>IN2</sub> refers to the first premise of A<sub>IN1</sub>, and the first premise of A<sub>IN3</sub> refers to the first premise of A<sub>IN2</sub>. If Doris asks Fred to justify the first premise of A<sub>IN3</sub>, Fred will repeat the previously given argument, and if Doris ask Fred to justify the first premise of this further argument, he will again repeat the previously given argument, and so forth.

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<sup>33</sup> I'll trust readers can easily apply the results of my discussion to the regress that ensues when Doris ask Fred to justify his assumption that the premises of A1 support the conclusion of A1.

<sup>34</sup> I'm simplifying a bit. As far as premise (1) of the initial TIP argument, A1, is concerned, Doris can focus on two different questions. She might ask Fred how he knows  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is based on (originates in)  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ , and how he know that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience. I discuss what happens if she asks the second of these questions. The structure of unfolding series of arguments will be the same for the regress that would ensue if Doris were instead to ask the first of these questions.

Two things are now perfectly clear. First, this pattern is in principle infinite. Second, if Doris and Fred are reasonable, they will recognize that further pursuit of this regress is pointless: it will not deepen their understanding of why Fred is justified in believing, or how he knows, that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ : a clear and vivid visual experience. The basic point is that he has introspective awareness of what is visual experience is like, and that he is introspectively aware of his introspective awareness. Therefore, although the introspective track of the regress could in principle carry on endlessly, it ceases to produce further justificational juice, which amounts to a kind of termination.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Nature of Introspective Awareness**

It might be objected that the introspective track reveals the following: if Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  requires that he have reasons supporting the premises of the initial TIP argument, A1, then the following vicious regress ensues. It must be that Fred:

1. has clear and vivid introspective awareness that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience,
2. has clear and vivid introspective awareness that he has clear and vivid introspective awareness that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience,
3. has clear and vivid introspective awareness that he has clear and vivid introspective awareness that he has clear and vivid introspective awareness that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience

and so forth. In short, for Fred to have justification for premise (1) of A1, he must have an infinite series of layers of introspective meta-awareness. As a finite mind, Fred is not capable of such a feat. Hence, the principle of evidential meta-justification has the consequence that Fred's belief about the nature of  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  cannot be justified.

There is a straightforward response to this worry. Introspective awareness is, as Roderick Chisholm would have put it, self-presenting: it comes with introspective awareness of itself. To know I'm introspecting, I don't need to meta-introspect. For example, when I have a headache, I know I do because I can feel it. Feeling my headache has awareness built into it. Likewise, when Fred is introspectively aware that he is having a visual experience of the dog—as opposed to an auditory, tactile, or olfactory one—that introspective awareness is self-presenting. Fred does not need an additional introspection to know he is introspectively aware of what kind of an experience  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is.

Let's review. When Doris ask Fred how he knows  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience, Fred replies that he knows this through introspection. When Doris asks him how he knows that he knows this through introspection, he will say: "I'm introspectively aware that I'm introspectively aware of it." Doris might now say: "And how do you know *that?*" To answer this question, Fred need only repeat his previous answer.

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<sup>35</sup> Doris might ask Fred why he takes himself to know that clear and vivid introspective experiences are truth-conducive. His reply should be that he remembers that they are. For the sake of illustration, he might say, for example, that he doesn't remember any situations in which he thought he was seeing a dog when it turned out that he was not seeing a dog but smelling one (or hearing one, or feeling one with his hands.) Put differently, memory tells us that we are highly reliable in identifying a specific perceptual experience as visual, auditory, tactile, or olfactory.

## The Memorial Track

Now suppose Doris next asks Fred to justify the second premise of A1, his initial meta-justificatory argument:

- (2) Clear and vivid visual experiences are reliable.

Fred replies that he remembers that visual experience of this type produce nearly always true beliefs and thus offers the following argument:

### **A<sub>ME1</sub>**

- (1) I have a clear and vivid memory that clear and vivid visual experiences are reliable.<sup>36</sup>
- (2) Clear and vivid memories are reliable.

Therefore:

- (3) It's highly likely true that my clear and vivid visual experiences are reliable.

Carrying on, Doris asks Fred to justify the second premise of A<sub>ME1</sub>. That is, she asks Fred to explain how he knows that clear and vivid memorial experiences are reliable. Fred answers that he remembers that and proceeds to give the following argument:

### **A<sub>ME2</sub>**

- (1) I have a clear and vivid memory that clear and vivid memories are reliable.
- (2) Clear and vivid memories are reliable.

Therefore:

- (3) It's highly likely true that clear and vivid memories are reliable.

As Doris did when she and Fred were on the introspective track, she might now say to him: "You just presented me with a new argument: A<sub>ME2</sub>. This argument has two premises each of which requires a reason. Please give me your reason for premise (2) of this argument." Here is Fred's response:

### **A<sub>ME3</sub>**

- (1) I have a clear and vivid memory that clear and vivid memories are reliable.
- (2) Clear and vivid memories are reliable.

Therefore:

- (3) It's highly likely true that clear and vivid memories are reliable.

A<sub>ME2</sub> and A<sub>ME3</sub> are two tokens of the same type. Fred's giving A<sub>ME2</sub> is one speech act, his giving A<sub>ME3</sub> is another. But in giving A<sub>ME3</sub>, Fred isn't saying anything new. Although Doris and Fred could in principle go on forever, nothing of value will henceforth be achieved. What is of epistemic value has already been captured: Fred knows through memory that clear and vivid visual experiences are reliable, and he knows through memory that clear and vivid memorial

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<sup>36</sup> If Doris were to challenge this premise, a regress along the introspective track would ensue. Its structure would replicate the regress discussed in the previous section.

experiences are reliable.<sup>37</sup> If Doris is reasonable, she will abstain from asking Fred again to justify premise (2) of  $A_{ME3}$ , consider the matter closed, and buy him a drink.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Five Stages of the Justificational Regress**

One of Ginet's objections to Klein's infinitism concerns the content of the allegedly infinite regress. He asks for an illustration of what's going on when Doris and Fred continue traversing the allegedly infinite regress for at least some distance. In the previous two sections, I have taken Ginet's request seriously and examined what ensues when Doris and Fred carry on for quite a while. A noteworthy outcome presented itself: paradoxically, although the argumentative regress is in principle infinite, there is nevertheless a clear sense in which it terminates in its final stage. Let's review the overall structure of the argumentative regress:

- Stage 1: Fred asserts that the dog ate the cookie. When Doris asks him to justify this belief, he mentions three further propositions: the dog is on the couch, looks guilty, and Fred's cookie is gone. This is the *doxastic* stage.
- Stage 2: When Doris asks him to justify his belief that the dog is on the couch, Fred might say what is clearly a proper response: "I can see it." Since he is an experiential foundationalist, he expresses this point by saying that he has a visual experience as though the dog is on the couch. This is the *experiential grounding* stage.
- Stage 3: When Doris goes meta and asks Fred why he takes  $E_{DOG}$  to be a reason for  $B_{DOG}$ , he offers an initial TIP argument:  $E_{DOG}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience, and such experiences are truth-conducive. This is the *initial meta* stage.
- Stage 4: Next, the regress branches into two tracks. Initiating the introspective track, Doris asks Fred to justify his claim that  $E_{DOG}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience. In response, Fred offers two further TIP arguments:  $A_{IN1}$  and  $A_{IN2}$ . Initiating the memorial regress, Doris asks Fred to justify his claim that clear and vivid memorial experiences are truth-conducive. In response, Fred offers another pair of TIP arguments:  $A_{ME1}$  and  $A_{ME2}$ . This is the *supplementary meta* stage.
- Stage 5: Doris points out that there is an algorithm for generating an infinite number of additional TIP arguments. She might say: "Fred, you just used four supplementary TIP arguments with two premises each to justify the two premises of your initial TIP argument. Therefore, you owe me eight more arguments to justify the premises of your supplementary TIP arguments. Once you have provided them, you will owe me sixteen more arguments, and then thirty-two arguments, so forth. Alas, I agree with you that, in providing me with these arguments, you will only repeat the main thought you already expressed, namely that introspection tells you what you

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<sup>37</sup> Some epistemologists would strenuously object that it's irrational to attempt to justify the reliability of memory by using memory itself. See, for example, Fumerton 1995, p. 177. He says: "You cannot use perception to justify the reliability of perception! You cannot use memory to justify the reliability of memory! You cannot use induction to justify the reliability of induction! Such attempts . . . involve blatant, indeed pathetic, circularity." See also Alston 1993. I'm not persuaded by the objection that using our faculties to establish the reliability of our faculties involves vicious circularity. See Steup 2013.

<sup>38</sup> If Doris were to ask Fred to justify why he thinks  $A1$ 's conclusion follows from  $A1$ 's premises, she would trigger a regress along an intuitional track. Its structure would replicate that of the introspective and memorial tracks.

experience, introspect, and remember, and that memory tells you that your clear and vivid perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences are reliable. Given all that, I agree you have provided me with a satisfying defense of your claim that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a reason for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , and ultimately with a complete justification of your assertion that the dog ate your cookie. Well done, Fred.” This is the stage of *vacuous infinity*.

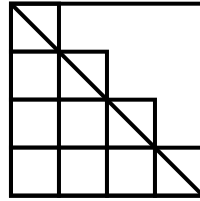
The justificational regress, then, is both finite and infinite. It is finite because, when it comes to revealing the flow of genuine justificational juice, stages 2-4—the experiential grounding, the initial TIP argument, and two rounds of supplementary TIP argumentation—do all the work. In stage 5, which begins with the third round of defending the two premises of the initial TIP argument, further TIP argumentation fails to be productive: it does not identify any additional source of justification. The regress now deteriorates into vacuous infinity. This type of infinity is benign and does not pose a problem for the claim that Fred is justified in believing that the dog is on the couch.

### Benign Infinity

Here is an analogy. Consider the following equation:

$$1 + 2 + 3 + \dots + n = \frac{n^2}{2} + \frac{n}{2}.$$

Its truth is not obvious. Now consider the following large square in which each natural number is represented with a little square. It illustrates the equation for  $n = 4$ .<sup>39</sup>



$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = \frac{4^2}{2} + \frac{4}{2} = 10.$$

If one looks at the square, one sees that the little squares representing the natural numbers on the left side of the equation make up one half of the large square plus one half of  $n$  little squares, in this case one half of four little squares. As one comprehends this, one intuits that the equation works for any value for  $n$ . A nagging doubter might suggest drawing a square for  $n = 5$  to see whether we get the same result, and then a square for  $n = 6$ , just to make sure, and so forth. Obviously, nothing will be accomplished by carrying on. Two conclusions follow. First, the initial intuition triggered by looking at the diagram is sufficient for understanding why the equation is true. Considering additional squares is pointless. It will not deepen our understanding. Second, since the equation is true for any  $n$ , it has an infinite number of

<sup>39</sup> James Brown, Reinhardt Lecture at CU Boulder, “Pure and Applied: Mathematics and Ethics,” October 6, 2017.



instances. Such infinity is benign. The fact that there is an infinite number of instances, and the fact that as finite minds we could not comprehend the actual propositions stating the equations for extremely large values of  $n$  does not limit at all our understanding of the equation's truth.

Let's return to the dialogue between Fred and Doris. When Fred says he introspects that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience, Doris can ask him how he knows that. Fred will reply he introspects that is introspecting this. Doris can ask him again how he knows this. Fred can say again that he is introspecting that he is introspecting. It seems clear Doris and Fred can carry on endlessly moving in this circle. It is equally clear that doing so is pointless, and that the infinity involved is benign. It doesn't threaten Fred's initial claim that he knows through introspection he's having a clear and vivid visual experience.

The same can be said for the memorial track. When Fred says he remembers that clear and vivid visual experiences are truth-conducive, Doris will demand a justification. Fred will reply that he knows this because of a clear and vivid memory, and that such memories are truth-conducive. If Doris continues asking Fred for a reason, he will say that he knows through memory that clear and vivid memories are truth conducive. If Doris continues pressing Fred for a reason, they'll start moving in circles. If they had an infinite amount of time, they could carry on in this fashion forever. Again, two things are clear: Carrying on would be pointless, and the involved infinity poses no threat to Fred's claim that what he remembers about his clear and vivid visual and memorial experiences justifies him in trusting them.

### **Does the Argumentative Increase Justification?**

I have argued that we must distinguish between two claims. The first is that the argumentative regress is in principle infinite. The second is that all justification is inferential. I have also argued that the former claim does not entail the latter. Klein, though, thinks it does. Hence Klein needs a response to Ginet's objection that inference cannot create but only transfer justification.<sup>40</sup> Ginet's point is that infinitism makes it impossible to understand where justification comes from. Klein responds by saying that justification emerges as the argumentative regress expands. The more reasons are given, the more justification increases. There are three problems with this claim. First, as I argued above, this response leaves unexplained why  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is already justified at  $t_{\text{before}}$ . Second, it makes the justification of our beliefs dependent on the activity of reason giving—a consequence I find utterly implausible. Third, when Fred has completed the supplementary meta stage and moves on to stage 5, the argumentative regress deteriorates into pointlessness. If Doris continues to press Fred to give further reasons, all he can say is: I introspect that I'm introspecting what kind of experiences I have, and my memory tells me that basing beliefs on clear and vivid perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences is truth-conducive. When this stage is reached and Doris and Fred carry on with the business of reason giving, nothing of value will henceforth be achieved. I don't find it plausible, therefore, that the longer the regress lasts, the more justification is generated.

In fact, I find it doubtful that, by responding to Doris's continued demands for reasons, Fred increases his justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  to any degree. According to non-dogmatic foundationalism, Fred's belief is justified at  $t_{\text{before}}$  because of: (i)  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ , (ii) Fred's clear and vivid introspective

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<sup>40</sup> See Ginet 2014a, p. 290f.

awareness that  $E_{\text{DOG}}$  is a clear and vivid visual experience, (iii) memorial awareness that clear and vivid introspective and visual experiences are truth-conducive, and (iv) memorial awareness that clear and vivid memories are truth-conducive. These are reasons Fred already has before his dialogue with Doris commences. Obliging Doris's requests to justify  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ , Fred does not generate new reasons for his belief but merely articulates and makes public the reasons he had to begin with. I'm inclined to think, therefore, that the argumentative regress that ensues between Doris and Fred does not increase Fred's justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  at all. It merely reveals where Fred's justification comes from.

### **Foundationalist Infitism**

I conclude by summing up where I agree and where I disagree with Klein's infinitism. First and most fundamentally, I agree with Klein that justification requires meta-justification. Second, I agree with Klein that the argumentative regress is in principle infinite. Third, I agree with Klein that the infinity involved is benign. However, and here my disagreement with Klein begins, the infinity in question is benign not because, as Klein suggests, it is merely an infinity of potential reasons. Rather, it is benign because an argumentative regress that infinite beings might carry on forever ceases at stage 5 to produce any new reasons. It merely repeats previously stated reasons. The potential infinity of the argumentative regress does not, therefore, require an infinite amount of reasons.

Second, I disagree with Klein's claim that the longer the regress continues, the more justification is produced. I claim instead that, if  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  is justified to begin with, then Fred must have, prior to his dialogue with Doris, all the reasons needed for complete meta-justification. Due to these reasons, Fred's belief is fully justified. It does not gain additional justification when Fred, prompted by Doris, uses these reasons to provide meta-justification for  $B_{\text{DOG}}$ .

Third, I disagree with Klein's claim that justification is created through inference. Fred's belief was already completely justified before Doris and Fred began their dialogue. At that time,  $B_{\text{DOG}}$  was justified non-inferentially: not by any inferences but instead by Fred's initial visual experience,  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ , and the various introspective and memorial states providing him with the reasons for the reliability of  $E_{\text{DOG}}$ . I do not, therefore, see a necessary conflict between foundationalism and infinitism. However, infinitism isn't compatible with just any form of foundationalism. Infinitism results from the principle of meta-justification. Dogmatic foundationalism rejects this principle. Hence, I strongly suspect Klein rejects dogmatism. If he does, I find myself again in agreement with him. If dogmatism is true, there can be justification without meta-justification. If there can be justification without meta-justification, there will be a point when Fred has nothing to show for when Doris ask him to justify his most recent assertion. Klein would say that introduces an unacceptable kind of arbitrariness. On that, I couldn't agree more with him.

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