Can a coherentist be an externalist?

William Roche
Department of Philosophy, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX, USA, e-mail: w.roche@tcu.edu

ABSTRACT: It is standard practice, when distinguishing between the foundationalist and the coherentist, to construe the coherentist as an internalist. The coherentist, the construal goes, says that justification is solely a matter of coherence, and that coherence, in turn, is solely a matter of internal relations between beliefs. The coherentist, so construed, is an internalist (in the sense I have in mind) in that the coherentist, so construed, says that whether a belief is justified hinges solely on what the subject is like mentally. I argue that this practice is fundamentally misguided, by arguing that the foundationalism/coherentism debate and the internalism/externalism debate are about two very different things, so that there is nothing, qua coherentist, precluding the coherentist from siding with the externalist. I then argue that this spells trouble for two of the three most pressing and widely known objections to coherentism: the Alternative-Systems Objection and the Isolation Objection.

It is standard practice, when distinguishing between the foundationalist and the coherentist, to construe the coherentist as an internalist, as if the coherentist were inextricably wedded to internalism. The coherentist, the construal goes, says that justification is solely a matter of coherence, and that coherence, in turn, is solely a matter of internal relations between beliefs. The coherentist, so construed, is an internalist (in the sense I have in mind) in that the coherentist, so construed, says that whether a belief is justified hinges solely on what the subject is like mentally.

I shall argue that this practice is fundamentally misguided, by arguing that the foundationalism/coherentism debate and the internalism/externalism debate are about two very different things, so that where a theorist stands on one such debate leaves it entirely open where he stands on the other such debate. The claim, in short, is that there is nothing, qua coherentist, precluding the coherentist from siding with the externalist. I shall then argue that this spells trouble for two of the three most pressing and widely known objections to coherentism: the Alternative-Systems Objection and the Isolation Objection. The problem, I shall argue, is that each version of each such objection is premised on the mistaken idea that the coherentist is an internalist.

1 The foundationalism/coherentism debate

Much has been said on the foundationalism/coherentism debate, both as to what the debate is about and as to who the winner is.[1] I shall thus make just a few comments on it, highlighting three questions on which the foundationalist and the coherentist disagree.

The first is whether there is non-inferential justification, which is justification independent of logical (i.e., deductive or inductive) support from other beliefs. The foundationalist answers in the affirmative, oftentimes arguing that the key to non-inferential justification is sensory experience. The coherentist, in contrast, answers in the negative—so that a belief is justified only if it is logically supported by other beliefs.

The point of the foundationalist's regress argument, of course, is to establish just such a claim (viz., that there is non-inferential justification). Suppose, the argument goes, that there were no non-inferential justification. Then S's belief b_1 would be justified only if it were inferentially justified. That is, b_1 would be justified only if there were a belief b_2 such that b_2 is already justified, and b_2 stands in an inferential relation to b_1. b_2, in turn, would be justified only if there were a belief b_3 such that b_3 is already justified, and b_3 stands in an inferential relation to b_2. And so on. This would either stop with an unjustified belief b_n, or circle back to b_1, or continue on without end. Either way, b_1 would not be justified.[2] So if there were no non-inferential justification, there would be no justification at all. But obviously, there is justification. Thus there is non-inferential justification.

It might be thought that, in addition to the regress argument, the foundationalist could argue for the claim that there is non-inferential justification by simply pointing to a justified perceptual belief of some kind—since perceptual beliefs, of course, are non-inferential (i.e., not inferred from other beliefs). But this would be to misunderstand the debate about whether there is non-inferential justification. The debate is not about

---

[1] For discussion of what the debate is about, see Cornman 1977 and Haack 1993.

[2] The reasoning runs roughly as follows. Suppose, first, that the regress stops with an unjustified belief b_n. Then b_n would have no justification to give to b_{n-1}, which then would have no justification to give to b_{n-2}, . . . , which then would have no justification to give to b_2, which then would have no justification to give to b_1. b_1, thus, would not be justified. Suppose, second, that the regress circles back to b_1. Then b_1, to be justified, would have to give justification to itself, in that it would give justification to b_n, which then would give justification to b_{n-1}, which then would give justification to b_{n-2}, . . . , which then would give justification to b_2, which then would give justification to b_1. But this is impossible, and so b_1 (were the regress to circle back to b_1) would not be justified. And suppose, third, that the regress continues on without end. Then b_1 would be justified if b_2 were justified, b_2 would be justified if b_3 were justified, b_3 would be justified if b_4 were justified, ... With the regress continuing on without end, the conditionals too would continue on without end. Hence, b_1 would not be justified.

whether there are justified non-inferential beliefs. Even the coherentist thinks that there is non-inferential justification in that sense. Rather, the debate is about whether there are justified beliefs the justification of which is non-inferential—viz., justification independent of logical support from other beliefs. The mere fact that there are justified perceptual beliefs and that perceptual beliefs are non-inferential, therefore, in no way by itself shows that there is non-inferential justification.

The second question on which the foundationalist and the coherentist disagree is the question of how inferential justification works. The foundationalist, on one hand, says that inferential justification is part-to-part and uni-directional. What makes it part-to-part is that it moves between beliefs—the parts of the belief system. b_1 is justified inferentially by b_2, in virtue of b_2's already being justified, and b_2's standing in an inferential relation to b_1. b_2, in turn, is justified inferentially by b_3, in virtue of b_3's already being justified, and b_3's standing in an inferential relation to b_2. b_1, then, gets its justification from b_2, which, in turn, gets its justification from b_3.[3] What makes it uni-directional is that it moves in just one direction, so that b_2 is prior to b_1 and thus gives justification to, but does not receive justification from, b_1. b_3, in turn, is prior to b_2, so that it gives justification to, but does not receive justification from, b_2. The coherentist, on the other hand, says that inferential justification is whole-to-part, not part-to-part. b_2 stands in an inferential relation to b_1, just as the foundationalist supposes. b_3 stands in an inferential relation to b_2—again, just as the foundationalist supposes. However, it is D (the belief system), not b_2, that gives justification to b_1, and it is D, not b_3, that gives justification to b_2. There is justification transfer, but instead of moving from part to part (i.e., from belief to belief), it moves from whole to part (i.e., from system to belief).[4] The difference, thus, is that inferential justification is linear for the foundationalist, but holistic for the coherentist.[5]

The dialectic, it seems to me, runs as follows. The foundationalist gives the regress argument, and in doing so assumes (quite commonsensically) that inferential justification

---

[3] The foundationalist, of course, also allows for scenarios in which a belief is inferentially justified by two (or more) beliefs together, as well as for scenarios in which a belief inferentially justifies two (or more) beliefs.

[4] This talk of a system's being justified could simply be replaced by talk of a system's being justification-conferring. The point, either way, is that inferential justification, on the whole-to-part conception, is a function of playing an inferential role in a system of the right kind.

[5] Some theorists distinguish between linear coherentism and holistic coherentism, thus making room for the coupling of coherentism and the part-to-part conception of inferential justification. I ignore this possibility—construing the coherentist as pushing the whole-to-part conception—since linear coherentism, which is more aptly dubbed "part-to-part coherentism", is patently false. See Pollock and Cruz 1999 for more on the distinction. See Steup 1996 for more on the objection.

is part-to-part and uni-directional. The coherentist agrees with the second part of the argument, that if the regress (once started) were to stop with an unjustified belief b_n, or circle back to b_1, or continue on without end, then b_1 would not be justified. He further agrees with the third part, that there is justification. The fourth part, however, he finds entirely mysterious. How could it be, he queries, that a belief is non-inferentially justified? He thus rejects the first part, moving from the part-to-part-and-uni-directional conception of inferential justification to the whole-to-part conception—which keeps the regress (of justification) from ever starting.

The third, and final, question on which the foundationalist and the coherentist disagree is the question of what grounds inferential justification. The foundationalist points to non-inferential justification, saying that all inferentially justified beliefs get their justification, in the end, from non-inferentially justified beliefs.[6,7] The beliefs in the foundation, which are justified non-inferentially, inferentially justify the beliefs on the first floor (so to speak), which, in turn, inferentially justify the beliefs on the second floor, and so on. The coherentist, in contrast, points (at least in part) to coherence.[8] The view is that an inferentially justified belief gets its justification from the subject's belief system, which, in turn, gets its justification (at least in part) from its being coherent.

The parenthetical "at least in part" is significant, in that it allows for coherentists who require much more than just coherence for justification. Consider, for instance, the view that a system is justified just in case it is coherent and each of its beliefs is the result of a reliable belief-forming process. Though it says that inferential justification is partly grounded in reliability, it also says that inferential justification is partly grounded in coherence—and thus is a kind of coherentism.

---

[6] That the question of what grounds inferential justification differs from the question of how inferential justification works follows from the fact that the foundationalist and the infinitist agree on the latter but disagree on the former. They agree on how inferential justification works, agreeing that it is part-to-part and uni-directional. They disagree, however, on whether there is non-inferential justification and thus on what grounds inferential justification.

[7] The point could be put slightly differently, so that the foundationalist is saying not that inferential justification is grounded in non-inferential justification, but that inferential justification is grounded (at the end of the day) in, for instance, experience (which, in turn, explains non-inferential justification). But either way, the position is that inferential justification is dependent on non-inferential justification.

[8] That the coherentist says that inferential justification is grounded (at least in part) in coherence is what makes the coherentist a coherentist, and not some other kind of whole-to-part-ist. The consistentist, who thinks that what makes a system justified is consistency, would be an example of a non-coherentist proponent of the whole-to-part conception.

This, it seems to me, is the right result, since any view on which there is no non-inferential justification, on which inferential justification is whole-to-part, and on which inferential justification is partly grounded in coherence (and not even partly grounded in non-inferential justification) is diametrically opposed to the three core tenets of foundationalism. Consider, again, the hybrid view from the previous paragraph. It is in conflict with foundationalism on whether there is non-inferential justification, since it says that justification requires having good reason, and that only beliefs can supply this. It is in conflict with foundationalism on how inferential justification works, given that it says that inferential justification is whole-to-part (not part-to-part-and-uni-directional). And it is in conflict with foundationalism on what grounds inferential justification, pointing not to non-inferential justification (i.e., justified beliefs the justification of which is independent of any logical support from other beliefs) but to coherence and reliability. Hence it is coherentist in a very natural sense—viz., in being diametrically opposed to foundationalism, and in making heavy use of coherence.

But this, of course, is just a taxonomic issue, and is thus of no serious theoretical consequence. The point is the same either way: there are non-foundationalist views on which inferential justification is holistic, on which inferential justification is partly grounded in coherence, and on which inferential justification is partly grounded in things other than coherence.

The foundationalism/coherentism debate, thus, is about the structure of justification. The foundationalist—arguing that there is non-inferential justification, that inferential justification is part-to-part and uni-directional, and that inferential justification is grounded in non-inferential justification—argues that justification is skyscraper-like in structure. The coherentist—arguing that there is no non-inferential justification, that inferential justification is whole-to-part, and that inferential justification is grounded (at least in part) in coherence—argues that the system, not some special subset of it, is the primary seat of justification.

2 The internalism/externalism debate

The internalism/externalism distinction I have in mind, in saying that the coherentist can be an externalist, is about whether the things on which justification supervenes are either mental or supervenient on the mental. The internalist says that justification supervenes, in whole, on things that are either mental or supervenient on the mental—so that Smith and Jones, for example, are identical justificationally if they are identical mentally. In contrast, the externalist says that justification supervenes, in whole or in part, on things that are neither mental nor supervenient on the mental—so that the mere fact that Smith and Jones are identical mentally in no way guarantees that they are identical

justificationally. Let this distinction mark the mind-internalism/mind-externalism distinction.[9,10]

The simple coherentist, according to whom a belief is justified just in case it plays an inferential role in a coherent belief system, makes for a nice example on the internalist side. For if Smith and Jones are identical mentally, then they are identical in terms of beliefs and thus in terms of coherence.

The evidentialist, in the manner of Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, too is a mind-internalist. Whether a belief is justified hinges solely on whether it fits the subject's

---

[9] I am following Earl Conee and Richard Feldman in drawing the distinction in this manner:

> Somewhat more precisely, internalism as we characterize it is committed to the following two theses. The first asserts the strong supervenience of epistemic justification on the mental:
>
> S. The justificatory status of a person's doxastic attitudes strongly supervenes on the person's occurrent and dispositional mental states, events, and conditions.
>
> The second thesis spells out a principal implication of S:
>
> M. If any two possible individuals are exactly alike mentally, then they are alike justificationally, e.g., the same beliefs are justified for them to the same extent.
>
> (M) implies that mental duplicates in different possible worlds have the same attitudes justified for them. This cross world comparison follows from the strong supervenience condition in (S). Externalists characteristically hold that differences in justification can result from contingent non-mental differences, such as differing causal connections or reliability. Theories that appeal to such factors clearly deny (S) and (M). (Conee and Feldman 2001: 234)

But whereas I call the internalist "the mind-internalist" and the externalist "the mind-externalist", Conee and Feldman call the internalist "the mentalist" and the externalist "the non-mentalist".

[10] This distinction should not be confused with the access-internalism/access-externalism distinction. The debate between the access-internalist and the access-externalist is not about whether the things on which justification supervenes are either mental or supervenient on the mental, but about whether, to put it roughly (and a bit paradoxically), the subject needs to have access to the things on which justification supervenes. The two debates, and thus the two distinctions, are quite distinct, in that where a theorist stands vis-à-vis one such debate in no way dictates where he stands on the other such debate.

evidence—which consists of his beliefs and experiences.[11] Hence if Smith and Jones are identical mentally, they are identical in terms of beliefs and experiences and thus in terms of fittingness.[12]

For an instance on the externalist side, consider David Armstrong's account (construed as an account of justification instead of as an account of knowledge).[13] Roughly put, the view is that a belief is justified just in case the subject has a property H such that there is a law of nature to the effect that if a subject x has H, then x's holding the belief guarantees that it (i.e., the belief) is true. Neither the property nor the law (as construed by Armstrong) are either mental or supervenient on the mental, and so Armstrong's account is mind-externalist.

But what about past mental facts? Need a mind-internalist say that the justification facts at t are fixed by the mental facts at t? Or can he allow for mental facts prior to t? On the flip side, is a theorist a mind-externalist just in virtue of making the justification facts at t depend, in part, on certain mental facts prior to t? Or need he require a fact that is neither mental nor supervenient on the mental?[14] I shall opt for the latter, in each case—so that a mind-internalist can allow for mental facts prior to t, and so that a mind-externalist needs to require a fact that is neither mental nor supervenient on the mental.[15]

The claim, then, in saying that the coherentist can be an externalist is that the coherentist can be a mind-externalist, subscribing, thus, to the view that justification supervenes, in whole or in part, on things that are neither mental nor supervenient on the mental.

---

[11] See Conee and Feldman 1985, 15-34.

[12] The relation of fit, when the relata are a belief and an experience, is notoriously hard to make sense of. Conee and Feldman acknowledge this, and then (rather unsatisfyingly) leave matters at that.

[13] See Armstrong 1973.

[14] Conee and Feldman's construal is (strictly speaking) ambiguous on this issue. For "the person's occurrent and dispositional mental states, events, and conditions" can be read as either "the person's occurrent and dispositional mental states, events, and conditions at t" or "the person's occurrent and dispositional mental states, events, and conditions both at t and prior to t".

[15] The difference between a mind-internalist according to whom the justification facts at t are fixed exclusively by certain mental facts at t and a mind-internalist according to whom the justification facts at t are fixed by certain mental facts at t together with certain mental facts prior to t could then be marked by calling the former a "strong mind-internalist" and the latter a "weak mind-internalist".

3 Mind-externalist coherentism

Suppose that theorist C_I and theorist C_E agree that coherentism is right. That they agree on this would entail that they agree that all justification is inferential, that inferential justification is whole-to-part, and that a belief system is justified only if it is coherent. That they agree on these things, however, would in no way entail that they agree on whether a belief system is justified if it is coherent. In other words, that they agree that coherence is necessary for justification would in no way entail that they agree that coherence is sufficient for justification. Perhaps C_I would say yes while C_E would say no, and perhaps whatever else it is that C_E would require is neither mental nor supervenient on the mental—thus making C_E a mind-externalist. C_I and C_E, then, would agree that justification is not skyscraper-like in structure, but disagree on whether it is wholly mental in grounding.

The kind of coherentism to which I am partial, and defend elsewhere, makes for a nice example. First, it has an explanationist component, which says, in short, that an inductive inference, or inferential relation, is cogent only if it is explanatorily virtuous—where one way to be explanatorily virtuous is to be an instance of Inference to the Best Explanation. In this respect, the account is in the spirit of both William Lycan's brand of coherentism, and the brand oft attributed to Gilbert Harman and Wilfrid Sellars. Second, it has (what I call) a meta-perspectivalist component, which says, to put it (very) roughly, that S's belief that p obtains is justified only if S has a view as to how it is that he is connected to p. This, when fully spelled out, has the result that S's belief system is coherent only if S has a view as to how it is that he (or, better, his belief system) is connected to the outside world, and according to which the mechanisms involved (e.g., vision) are reliable. And third, it has a veridicality component, which ensures (among other things) that S's view as to how it is that he is reliably connected to the world is true—and thus, in turn, ensures that there could be mental duplicates whose beliefs differ in justification. Just imagine that Smith and Jones are identical mentally, but that whereas Smith is reliably connected to the world in the ways he thinks he is, Jones, because, say, of a malevolent demon, is not reliably connected to the world in the ways he thinks he is. Then Smith but not Jones would satisfy the veridicality requirement, and so Smith's beliefs but not Jones's beliefs would be justified. Here, thus, is a coherentist theory on which sameness in mentality, and thus sameness in coherence, is in no way sufficient for sameness in justification.

The point, more generally put, is that the foundationalism/coherentism debate and the mind-internalism/mind-externalism debate are about two very different things, and that because of this there is nothing, qua coherentist, precluding the coherentist from siding with the mind-externalist. The foundationalism/coherentism debate, on one hand, is about the structure of justification. The foundationalist says that it is skyscraper-like in structure. The coherentist says that it is holistic in structure. The mind-internalism/mind-

externalism debate, on the other hand, is about the grounding of justification. The mind-internalist says that it is grounded, in whole, in things that are either mental or supervenient on the mental. The mind-externalist says that it is grounded, at least in part, in things that are neither mental nor supervenient on the mental. It should come as no surprise, then, that where a theorist stands on one such debate is neutral with respect to where he stands on the other such debate.

This point is further evidenced by comparing, for example, the simple coherentist and the evidentialist. Each such theorist sides with the mind-internalist on the mind-internalism/mind-externalism question. But whereas the simple coherentist sides with the coherentist (obviously) on the foundationalism/coherentism question, the evidentialist sides with the foundationalist. This would not be possible if the debates were not about two very different things.

Or compare the evidentialist and the reliabilist. They agree on the foundationalism/coherentism question, but disagree on the mind-internalism/mind-externalism question.

That the coherentist can be an externalist, as I said in the introduction, is quite significant, given that two of the three most pressing and widely known objections to coherentism are premised, albeit implicitly, on the false claim that the coherentist is an internalist. To this I now turn.

4 The two objections

Critics of coherentism are quick to fasten on the fact that there are lots of incompatible yet fully coherent belief systems such that any self-consistent belief whatsoever is a member of at least one such system. Some argue from there to the sub-conclusion that coherentism is too permissive, or too liberal—letting people believe, with justification, whatever they want to believe. Richard Feldman, though not a fan of the objection, puts it quite nicely:

> Consider the proposition that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. If, as the objectors contend, there are many different, and incompatible, coherent systems of beliefs, there will be some systems that include this belief and others that include its negation. If that belief is part of your actual system, you can imagine a system that replaces everything supporting it or following from it with different propositions. By carefully constructing the new system, you could get one just as coherent as your current system, but including the proposition that Lincoln was not assassinated. Thus, if there are all these different coherent systems, then you can make any belief you want justified simply by picking and choosing the rest of your beliefs appropriately. That cannot be right. (Feldman 2003: 67)

Others, such as Paul Moser, argue instead to the sub-conclusion that coherentist justification is not connected to truth, so that the mere fact that a belief system is coherent in no way makes it likely, or such that there is good reason for thinking, that its beliefs are true:

> Mere coherence of a system of propositions, however comprehensive, fails to provide evidential probability concerning how things actually are. There are comprehensive coherent systems of obviously false, evidentially gratuitous propositions, such as propositions in science fiction. And for virtually any coherent system of propositions, we can imagine an alternative system consisting mainly of the denials of the propositions in the first system. But of course two such coherent systems cannot both be probability-providing for a person concerning how things actually are. This is especially clear if we construe "probable" as "more probable than not". For if a proposition, P, is evidentially more probable than its denial, ~P, then ~P is not evidentially more probable than P. These considerations indicate that the mere coherence of a system of propositions does not make its members evidentially probable for a person. At most such coherence makes the members possibly true. But if coherence by itself is not probability-providing, a coherent system of propositions is not automatically probability-providing. (Moser 1989: 62)

And still others argue instead to the sub-conclusion that coherentism is inapt as a procedure for deciding what to believe. Louis Pojman, for instance, can be read as thinking of the objection along such lines:

> The alternative systems (or worlds) objection states that the coherence of a theory is inadequate as a theory of justification since by itself it doesn't tell us how to distinguish between alternative, mutually incompatible coherent belief systems. It is true that an infinite number of belief systems can be consistent and mutually supportive, but how may we decide which one is true or closest to the truth? (Pojman 2001: 118)

With each version of the objection, there is a move from the claim that each of the various incompatible yet fully coherent belief systems is coherent to the claim that coherentism looks with favor on each such system—so that each such system is justified (or justification-conferring). But this, notice, requires that coherentist justification be solely a matter of coherence. If coherentist justification were in part a matter of something besides coherence, and if at least some of the various incompatible yet fully coherent belief systems were to fair poorly in terms of the something else in question, then, since it would not be the case that coherentism looks with favor on the systems fairing poorly on the something else in question, it would not be the case that coherentism

looks with favor on each of the various incompatible yet fully coherent belief systems. The implicit assumption, then, is that coherentist justification is solely a matter of coherence.

Critics of coherentism are also quick to fasten on the fact that coherence neither involves nor requires any sort of connection (e.g., causal) to the outside world, arguing to the sub-conclusion that coherentism severs the tie between justification and truth. Some such critics, such as Susan Haack, argue to this sub-conclusion via the claim that likelihood of truth requires a system-world connection of some sort:

> To get this objection to coherentism in as strong a form as possible, it is desirable (though I shall continue to call it the drunken sailors argument) to spell it out literally. The fundamental objection is this: that because coherentism allows no non-belief input—no role to experience or the world—it cannot be satisfactory; that unless it is acknowledged that the justification of an empirical belief requires such input, it could not be supposed that a belief's being justified could be an indication of its truth, of its correctly representing how the world is.
>
> In the end, I believe, this argument really is fatal to coherentism. A theory couched in terms exclusively of relations among a subject's beliefs faces an insuperable difficulty about the connection between the concepts of justification and truth. How could the fact that a set of beliefs is coherent, to whatever degree and in however sophisticated a sense of "coherent", be a guarantee, or even an indication, of truth? (Haack 1993: 26-7)

Other such critics argue instead via the claim that, since coherence neither involves nor requires any sort of system-world connection, coherentism allows for scenarios in which a belief system is fully justified (or justification-conferring) but entirely isolated from the outside world. Laurence BonJour, though (at the time) not a proponent of the objection, puts it thus:

> Coherence is purely a matter of the internal relations between the components of the belief system; it depends in no way on any sort of relation between the system of beliefs and anything external to that system. Hence if, as a coherence theory claims, coherence is the sole basis for empirical justification, it follows that a system of empirical beliefs might be adequately justified, indeed might constitute empirical knowledge, in spite of being utterly out of contact with the world that it purports to describe. Nothing about any requirement of coherence dictates that a coherent system of beliefs need receive any sort of input from the world or be in any way causally influenced by the world. But this is surely an absurd result. Such a self-enclosed system of beliefs, entirely immune from any external influence, cannot constitute empirical knowledge of an independent world, because the achievement of even

> minimal descriptive success in such a situation would have to be either an accident or a miracle, not something which anyone could possibly have any reason to expect—which would mean that the beliefs involved would not be epistemically justified, even if they should somehow happen to be true. (BonJour 1985: 108)

The key implicit premise, again, is that coherentist justification is solely a matter of coherence. This is why, in the first version, it is supposed to be worrisome that coherence is solely a matter of internal relations between beliefs, so that coherence neither involves nor entails any sort of connection to the outside world. It is also why, in the second version, the mere fact that coherence neither involves nor entails any sort of connection to the outside world is supposed to show that coherentism allows for justification in isolation scenarios.

It is false, though, that coherentist justification is solely a matter of coherence. Yes, the simple coherentist makes justification solely a matter of coherence. And so yes, some coherentists make justification solely a matter of coherence. But no, it is not the case that the coherentist—across the board—makes justification solely a matter of coherence. Some coherentists, such as the mind-externalist coherentist, make justification more than just a matter of coherence.

The point, then, is that the foundationalist—to win the debate with the coherentist on the structure of justification—needs more than just the Alternative-Systems Objection and the Isolation Objection. Even if, when properly targeted, such objections go through, they tell not against the coherentist's picture of the structure of justification, but instead against the coupling of the coherentist's picture of the structure of justification with the mind-internalist's picture of the grounding of justification.

5 Conclusion

The orthodox epistemological line vis-à-vis the structure and grounding of justification is, in my terms, that (1) the epistemologist has to choose between (a) mind-internalist foundationalism (e.g., evidentialism), (b) mind-externalist foundationalism (e.g., process reliabilism), and (c) mind-internalist coherentism (e.g., simple coherentism), and (2) objections such as the Alternative-Systems Objection and the Isolation Objection dictate against choosing (c) and, therefore, in favor of choosing either (a) or (b). I have challenged this orthodox line on two fronts. I have argued, first, that the epistemologist has a fourth option: (d) mind-externalist coherentism. I have argued, second, that mind-externalist coherentism is immune to both the Alternative-Systems Objection and the Isolation Objection—so that even if these objections are decisive against mind-internalist

coherentism, it in no way follows that the epistemologist has to choose between mind-internalist foundationalism and mind-externalist foundationalism.[16]

References

Armstrong, D. [1973], *Belief, Truth and Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

BonJour, L. [1985], *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

Conee, E. and Feldman, R. [1985], "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies*, 48, 15-34.

_____. [2001], "Internalism Defended," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 38 (1), 1-18.

Cornman, J. [1977], "Foundational versus Nonfoundational Theories of Justification," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 14 (4), 287-97.

Feldman, R. [2003], *Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall).

Haack, S. [1993], *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

Moser, P. [1989], *Knowledge and Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Pollock, J. and Cruz, J. [1999], *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers).

Steup, M. [1996], *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall).

[16] I wish to thank George Pappas, Joshua Smith, and William Melanson for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.