

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Epistemology
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FOUNDATIONALISM

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-01394-9 — Foundationalism
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Frontmatter
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009013949
DOI: 10.1017/9781009028868

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First published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-01394-9 Paperback
ISSN 2398-0567 (online)
ISSN 2514-3832 (print)

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009028868
First published online: June 2022

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Abstract: Foundationalism is a view about the structure of knowledge and justification. The heart of the thesis is the claim that if there is any knowledge or justified belief at all, then there is a kind of knowledge and justified belief that does not require inference from something else known or justifiably believed. This Element begins by exploring abstract arguments for foundationalism and against proposed alternatives. It then explores disagreements among foundationalists about how to understand foundational knowledge and justified belief, what is plausibly included in the foundations, and what is required for legitimate inference from foundations to the rest of what we believe. The author argues for the conclusion that one can combine insights captured by different versions of foundationalism by making a distinction between ideal justification and justification that falls short of that ideal.

Keywords: knowledge, justification, direct acquaintance, internalism and externalism, foundationalism

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ISBNs: 9781009013949 (PB), 9781009028868 (OC)
ISSNs: 2398-0567 (online), 2514-3832 (print)

Contents

1	The Structure of Knowledge and Justified Belief	1
2	What <i>Could</i> Make a Belief Noninferentially Justified?	15
3	What Belongs in the Foundations?	29
4	Traditional Foundationalism and the Challenge of Skepticism	37
	References	52