

A Localist Solution to the Regress of Epistemic Justification
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Abstract:

Guided by an account of the norms governing justificatory conversations, I propose that person-level epistemic justification is a matter of possessing a certain ability: the ability to provide objectively good reasons for one's belief by drawing upon considerations which one responsibly and correctly takes there to be no reason to doubt. On this view, justification requires responsible belief and is also objectively truth-conducive. The foundationalist doctrine of immediately justified beliefs is rejected, but so too is the thought that coherence in one's total belief system is sufficient, or indeed necessary, for justification. The problem of the regress is solved by exploiting the "localist" idea that in order to possess the ability to justify any given belief, one only needs to be in a position to draw upon appropriate justified background beliefs to provide good reasons for holding the belief; one needn't be able to defend the relevant background beliefs, and so on, all at one sitting.