



APPLYING A  
FOUNDHERENTIST FRAMEWORK  
TO THE  
MODERN LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC STATE

IAN HOLMES

PHL494: SENIOR THESIS IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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# THESIS

- ❖ I shall defend a foundherentist account that better aids humanity in justifying and understanding the liberal democratic state, and how we conceive of and operate within it.

# FOUNDATIONALISM

- ▶ Foundationalism dictates that a body of knowledge comprised of ideas, known as a noetic structure, is foundational, where the superstructure is rooted in absolute ideas that support all other non-foundational ones (Audi 2011, 216).
- ▶ The chain of justification then in foundationalism in both linear and one-directional strictly stemming from absolute beliefs. This also means that due to the nature of absolute beliefs, they receive no support or justification from the noetic structure that they create.
- ▶ Foundationalist views in political epistemology commonly flow along lines of justification from independent sources in locating the state's legitimacy. The objective is to provide one source of ultimate legitimacy and justification for the legitimization of the state to rest upon.

# CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONALISM

- ❖ Constitutional foundationalism is a model where certain rights and values in a constitutional system of government are fundamental to the point of being beyond the authority of a national legislature or amendment (Weill 2014, 132).
- ❖ Depending on what type of national system the constitutional foundationalist model is applied to, can result in a scenario where those rights and values are deemed so fundamental and enshrined that even the people or the original constituents cannot change or discard them (Weill 2014, 132).

Source Justification:  
God  
or  
Human Relations or Interest

Social Contract

The Government  
\*Not required to hold any particular form or type.

Chain of Justification for classical or contractarian foundationalism

Example of the initiating Chain of Justification for constitutional foundationalism, a constitutional state model

A Rights Based Model

National Legislature

Constitution:  
Enshrined Rights  
National Legislature  
Structure of Government

Right #1: Freedom of Speech

Right#2: Freedom of Assembly

Right#3: Political Participation and Representation

*the People*  
the assumed originator of liberal democracy

Monopoly on violence  
The assumed originator of sovereign legitimacy

Constitution  
Enshrines rights and creates a fundamental vision of government


Constitutional System  
Inclusive of the constitution, rights, governing institutions, and the electoral/voting system

# INTRODUCING FOUNDHERENTISM

- ❖ Haack started to develop foundherentism in the 1990s as a new middle ground solution between the spectrum of foundationalism on one end and coherentism on the other.
- ❖ Foundherentism is not one directional in its justification.
- ❖ These distinctions that make foundherentism unique are defined as; fallibilism, epistemic inequality, and Up-and-Back-ism.

# THE KEY COMPONENTS OF FOUNDHERENTISM:

- I. Knowledge is at the very least justified, true belief
- II. Evidence for a justification comes in the form of; “belief states, perceptual states, introspective states, and memory traces” (Haack 1993, 116).
- III. Justification is equivalent to reasoning
- IV. It is important to discern the initiating causes of one’s belief, and the viable causes at the time of initiation
  - a. Justification depends on the viable causes available at the time of the initiation of the belief.
- V. Fallibilism
  - a. No belief is epistemically secure in its justification
- VI. Privileged beliefs hold a very high degree of justified security.



VII. Foundherentism holds that basic or privileged beliefs are also fallible. Their justified security is relative because there is no absolute security. The potential insecurity of privileged beliefs is what provides them with enough content to justify other beliefs.

- a. “The more plausible the more secure the privileged beliefs are supposed to be, and the greater the burden of the support of unprivileged beliefs they are supposed to bear” (Haack 1982-1983, 155)

### VIII. Epistemic Inegalitarianism

- a. Some beliefs are more secure than others

### IX. Up-and-Back-ism

- a. The justification of beliefs is not one-directional, instead justification can essentially flow up and then back down creating reciprocal justification. Justification in foundherentism is omni-directional or rather simultaneously vertical and horizontal in providing justification to other linked beliefs. “More secure beliefs may depend on the justification of less secure beliefs and vice versa”, however a belief does not need to be exclusively justified by its connections and dependency on other beliefs, instead it could very well draw from experience (Haack 1982-1983, 149).

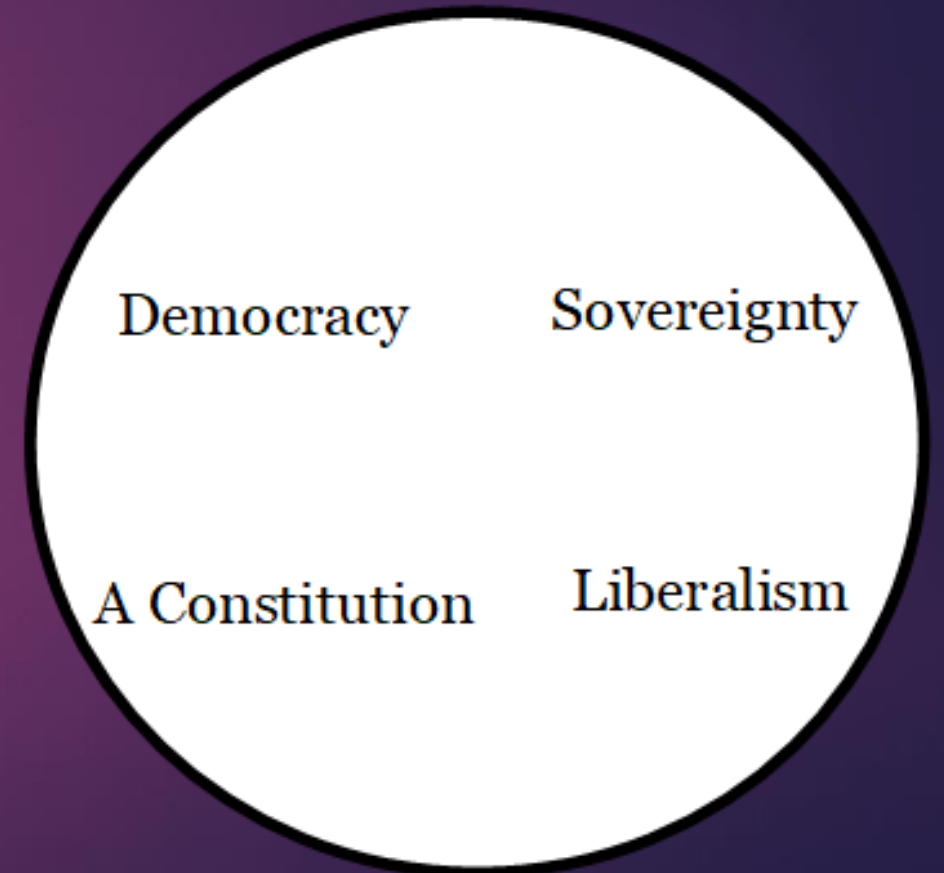


# FOUR FOUNDHERENTIST PRINCIPLES

- ❖ principle of relative justification - where different causes (CFIV) provide different levels of justification on a relative scale (CFVIII)
- ❖ principal of plurality - when multiple justifications based on those reasons available (CFIV) originate from experience (CFII) or other available beliefs (CFIX)
- ❖ principle of privileged beliefs - privileged beliefs have a high degree of security (CFVI), though they are not absolute (CFVII), that is based on both experience (CFII) and other beliefs that are linked to them (CFIX), which makes them the most secure beliefs in the belief structure (CFVIII)
- ❖ principle of the best inferred true belief - where the inferred belief is the belief with the best reasons for accepting it (CFIII), including its ability to cohere to the structure (CFVIII), and those other alternative beliefs which were not accepted had a lower degree of justification (CFIX)

# FOUR CATEGORIES OF THE LDM

- ❖ The rule of Westphalian sovereignty is that “the determination of domestic authority structures is strictly an internal matter” (Axtmann 2007, 135)
- ❖ It is generally held and argued that violence and the capacity and monopoly to use force is the central and exclusive characteristic of sovereignty (Abat i Ninet 2013, 21)
- ❖ Popular Sovereignty is an abstract democratic principle that states that legitimate political and legal authority within the state and all governmental powers are derived from the people as the legitimate source through consent and exercising power on their behalf (Daly and Hickey 2015, 21).



# CONSTITUTIONALISM & LIBERALISM

- ❖ A constitution will imply a set of rules and ideas that can be both written and unwritten that effectively describe a state's government and by extent, its constitutional system (Stimson 2008, 322)
- ❖ Three different types of constitutions; *we the people, the nation*, parliament
- ❖ Parliament as sovereign or the supreme lawmaker is also the only form of sovereignty where sovereignty is placed in a regularly functioning democratic and republican institution that acts with efficient mechanisms.
- ❖ Liberalism can be defined as a political ideology that champions individualism often in the form of rights, social equality, and limits on social and political power (Freeden and Stears 2015, 330)
- ❖ Ideological liberalism does intertwine and call for other practices such as; rights, political obligation, rule of law, equality, democracy, liberty in the form of freedoms, institutional stability, and social harmony (Freeden and Stears 2015, 329,331)
- ❖ In political science, liberal describes a type of political system where individuals and groups are well protected and civil society and private life is made autonomous and separate from one another while being insulated from the authority of the state (Diamond 2003, 29)

# DEMOCRACY

- ❖ Electoral Democracy - a constitutional system that requires legislative and high executive offices to be filled by civilians via regularly conducted, competitive, fair, multiparty elections with universal suffrage for full citizens
- ❖ Liberal democracy is more expansive by requiring three new fundamentals to the constitutional system that imply more components;
  - ❖ (1) there are no reserved domains of authority for the military or other actors that are not held accountable to the electorate;
  - ❖ (2) there must be both vertical accountability vis-à-vis elections and horizontal accountability of officeholders and institutions to one another;
  - ❖ (3) provisions must be made for political and civic pluralism, and individual and group freedoms (Diamond 2003, 34-35)

