

Master's in Philosophical Knowledge:
Foundations, Methods, Applications

Bergamo
Pavia

3. Justification

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Faculty of
Philosophy

lecture aims

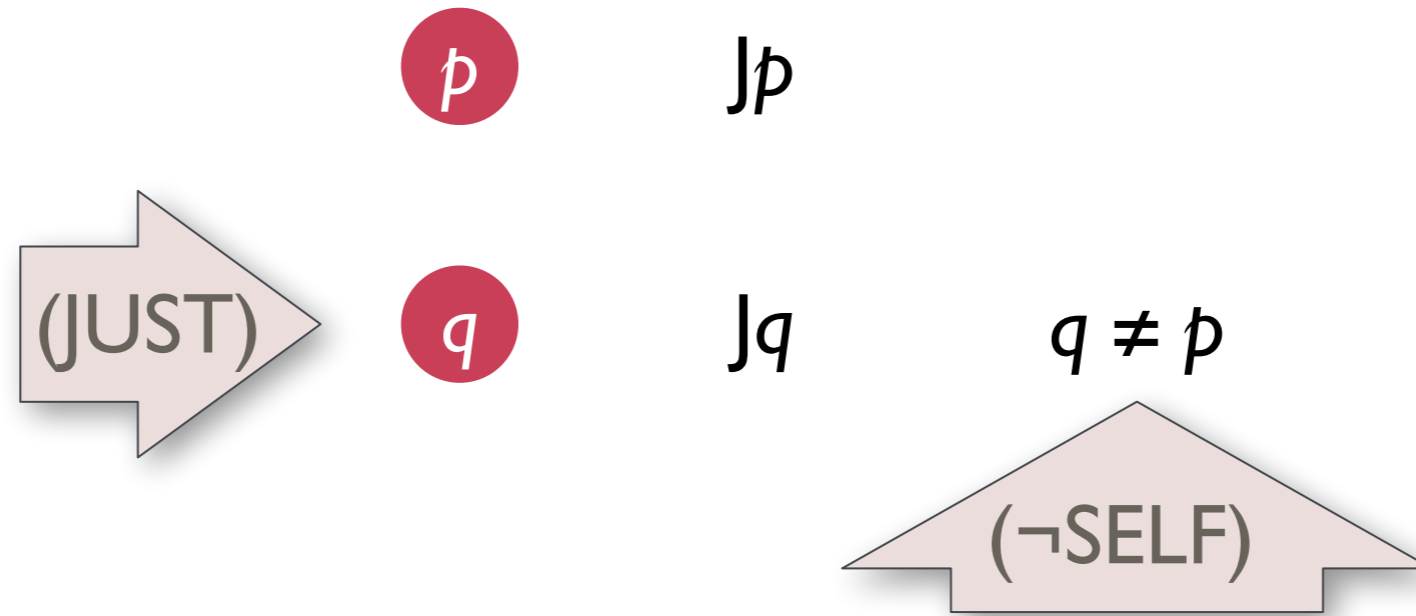
- to consider questions concerning the nature of justification
- does justification have a structure? foundationalism and coherentism
- the source of justification: internalism and externalism

the Agrippan trilemma

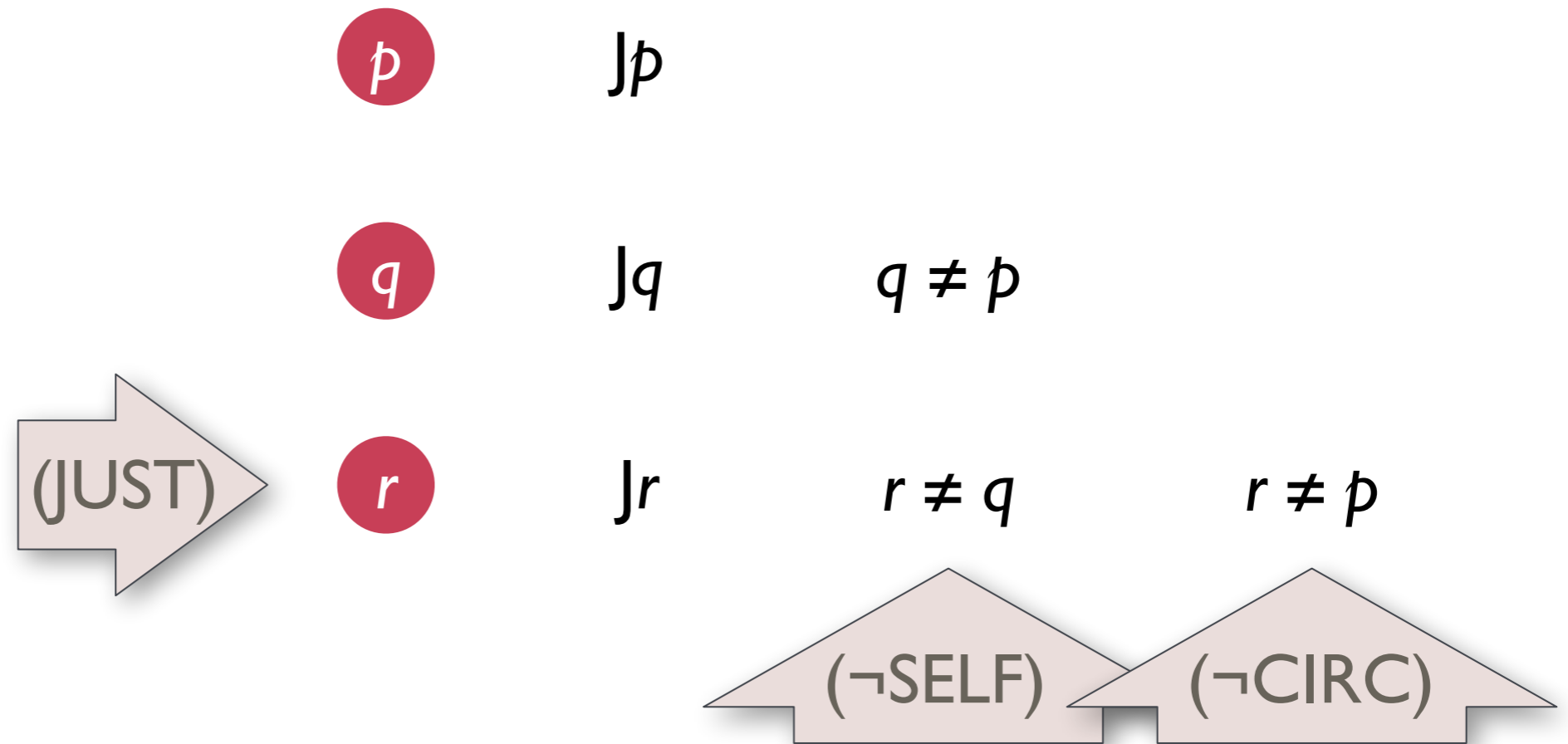
- (JUST) If S is justified in believing proposition p then, for some proposition q , S is justified in believing q and q supports p .
- (\neg SELF) A proposition cannot be justified by supporting itself.
- (\neg CIRC) A proposition cannot be justified by a chain of support that is circular.
- (\neg INF) A belief in a proposition cannot be justified by an infinite chain of support.

(SCEP-J) No-one has any justified beliefs

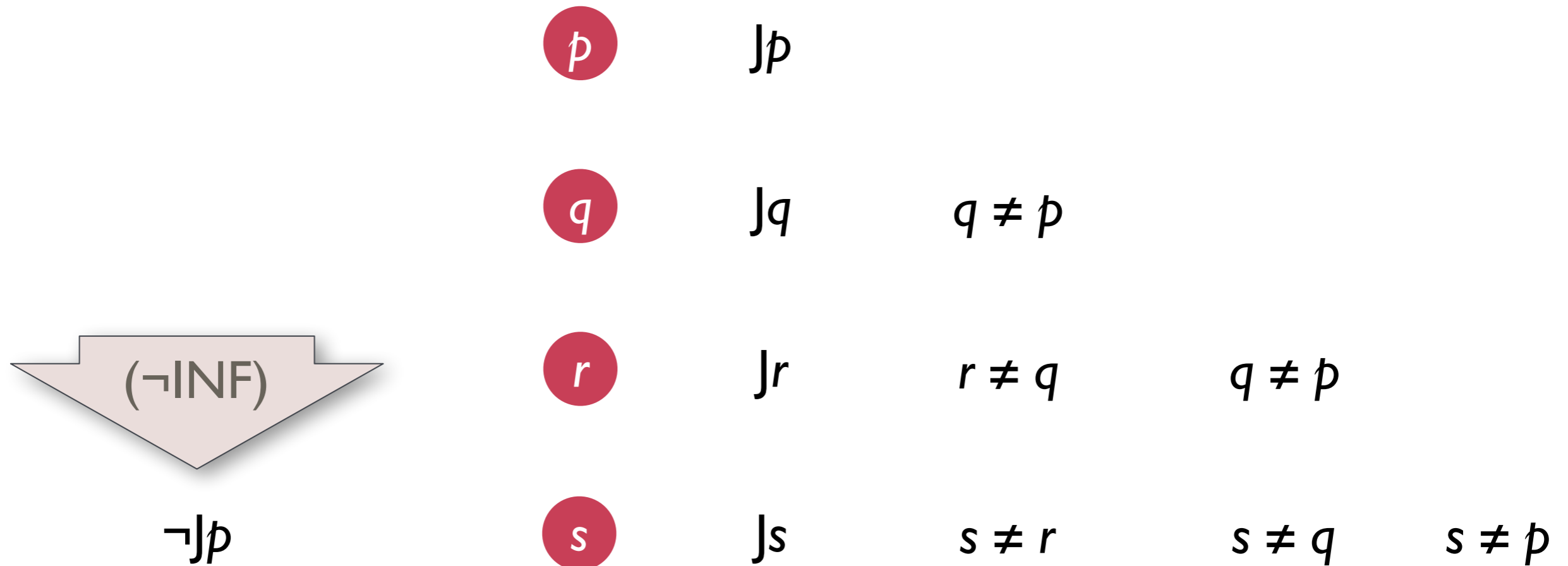
the Agrippan trilemma



the Agrippan trilemma



the Agrippan trilemma



(SCEP-J) No-one has any justified beliefs

the Agrippan trilemma

(SCEP-J) No-one has any justified beliefs

the Agrippan trilemma

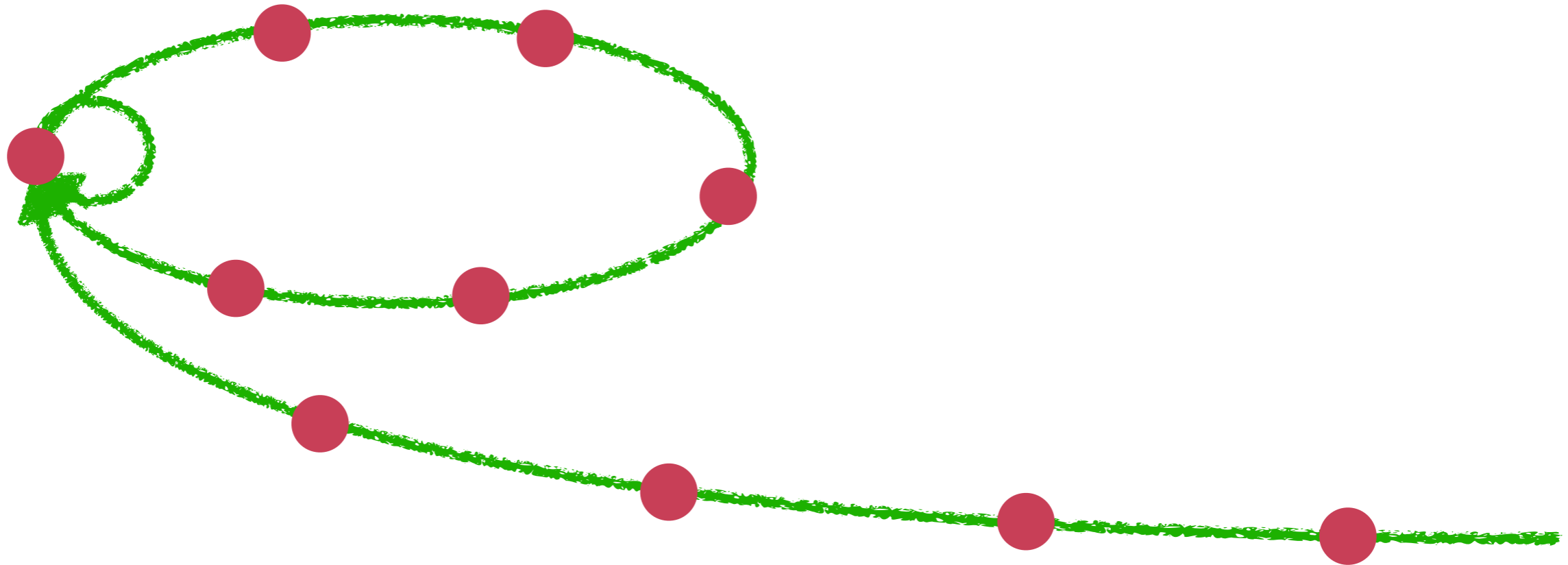
Agrippa (justification only)

$(\text{JUST}) \wedge (\neg \text{SELF}) \wedge (\neg \text{CIRC}) \wedge (\neg \text{INF})$

\models

(SCEP-J)

the Agrippan trilemma

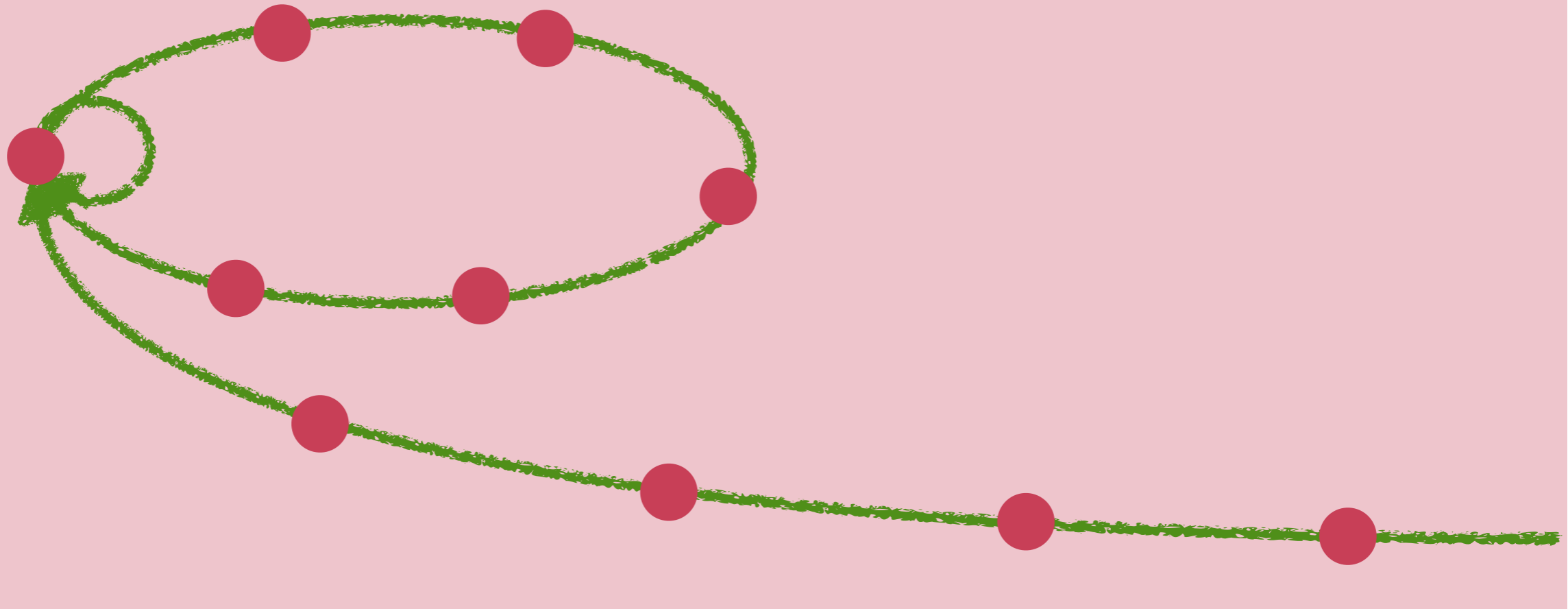


no self-
justification

no circular
justification

no infinite
justification

the Agrippan trilemma

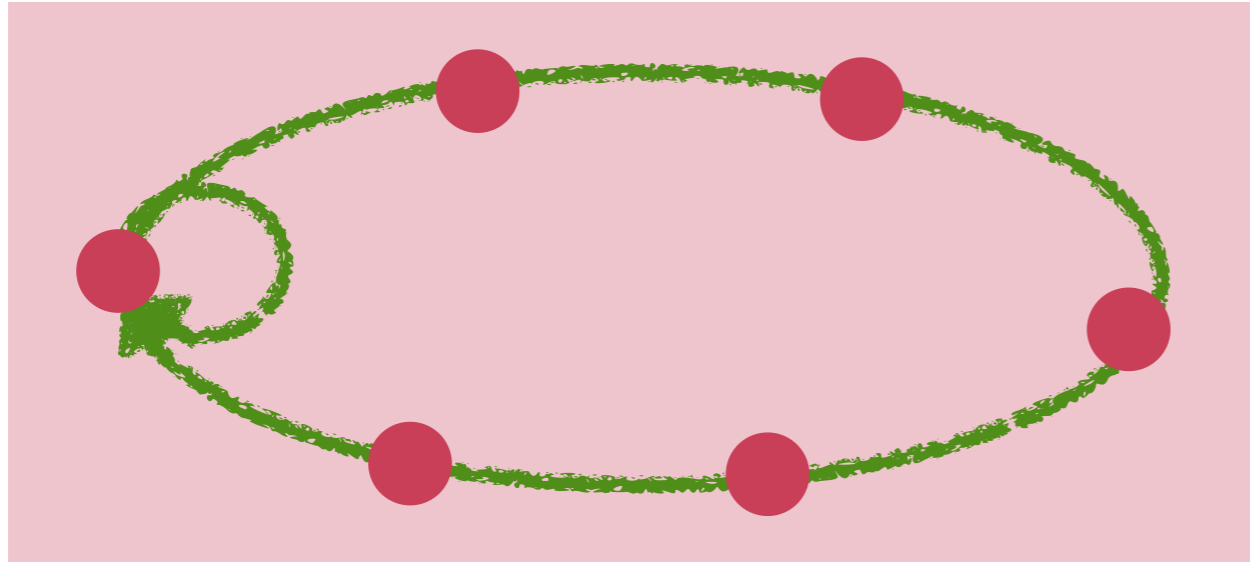


no self-
justification

no circular
justification

no infinite
justification

the Agrippan trilemma



no self-
justification

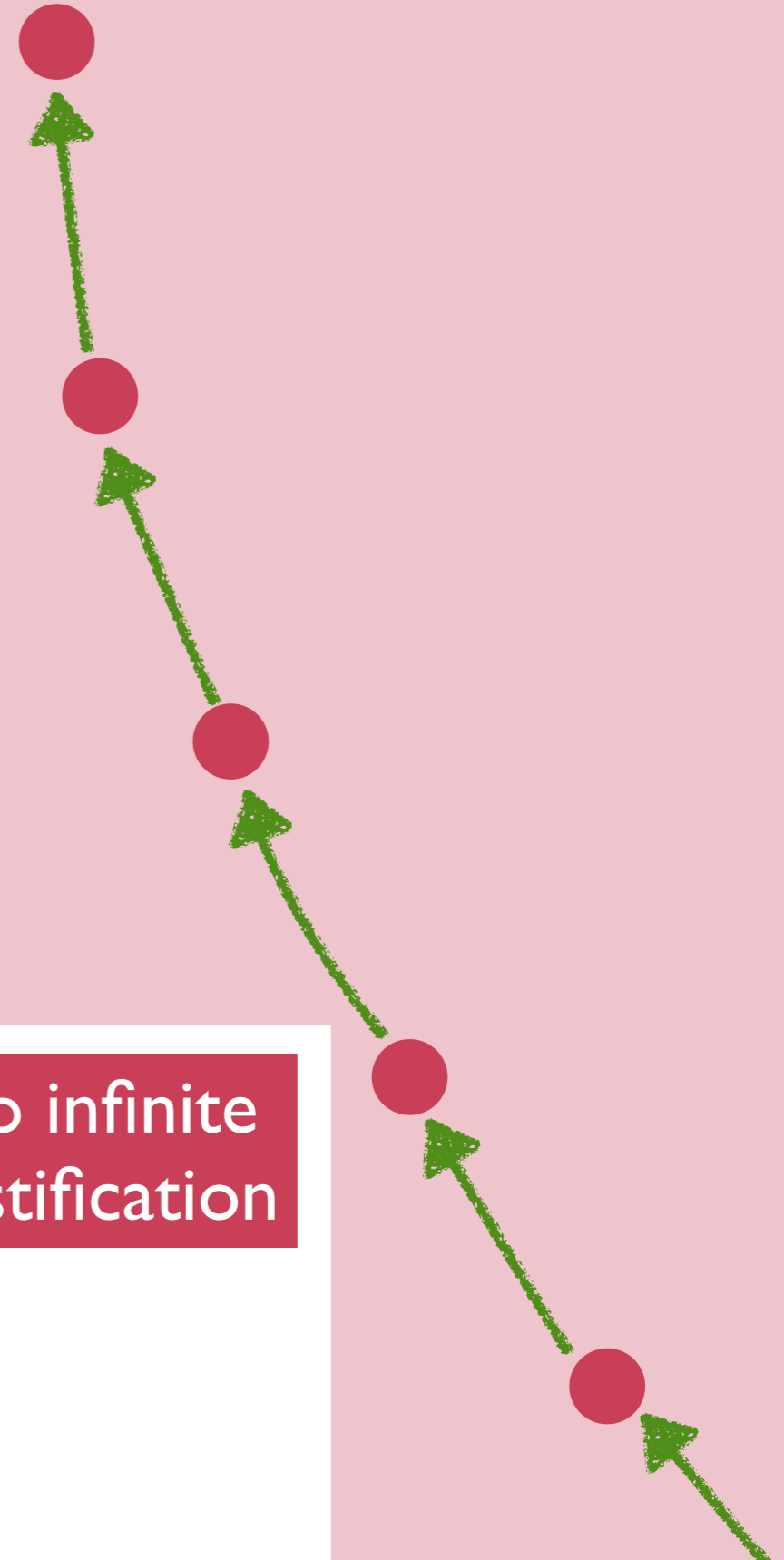
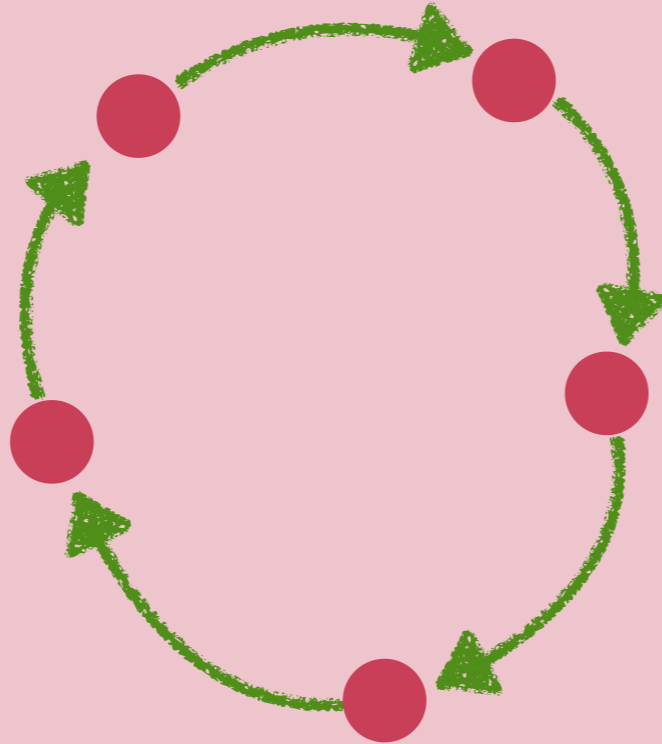
no circular
justification

no self-
justification

is a special case of

no circular
justification

the Agrippan trilemma (v.2)



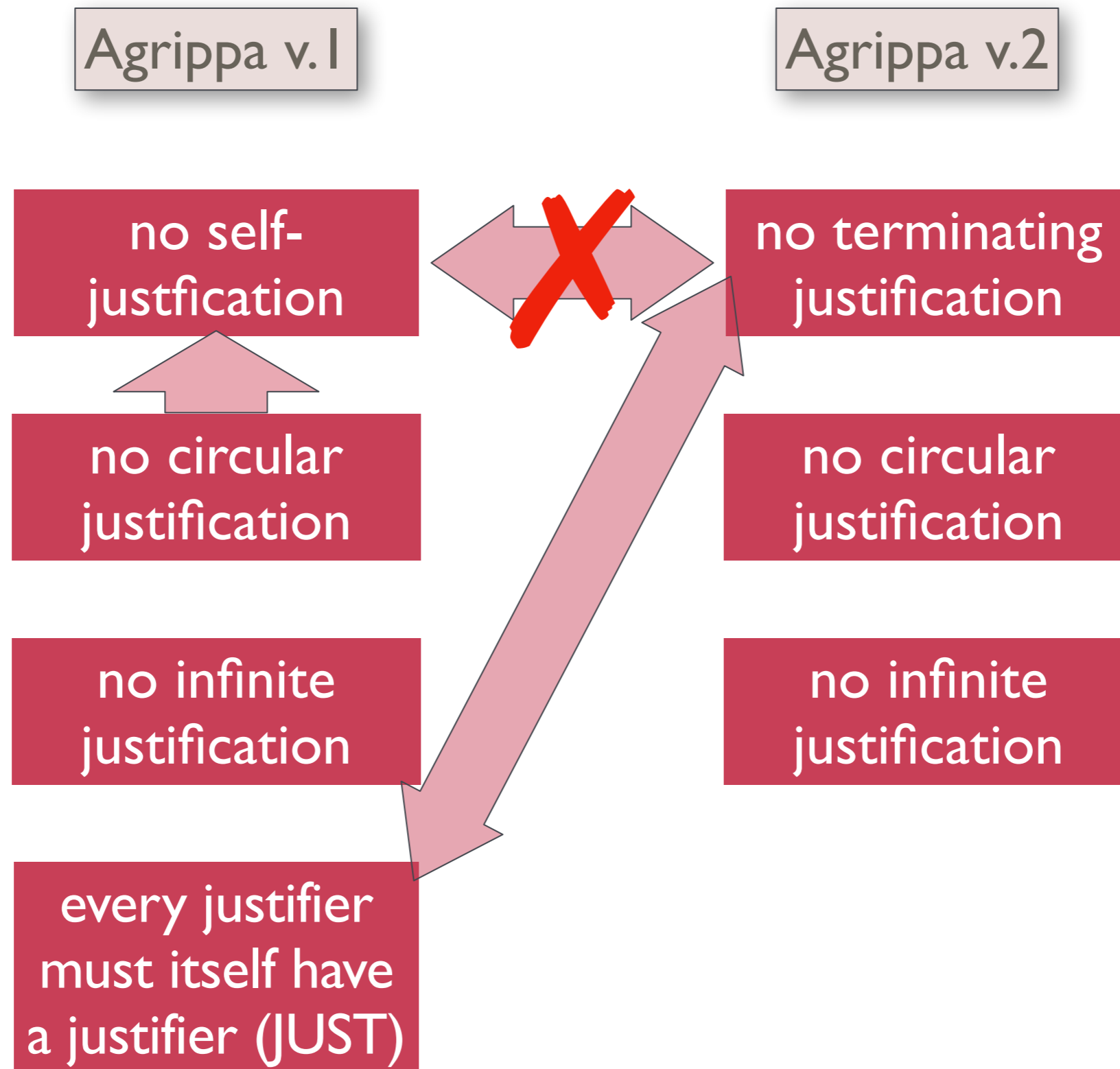
no terminating
justification

no circular
justification

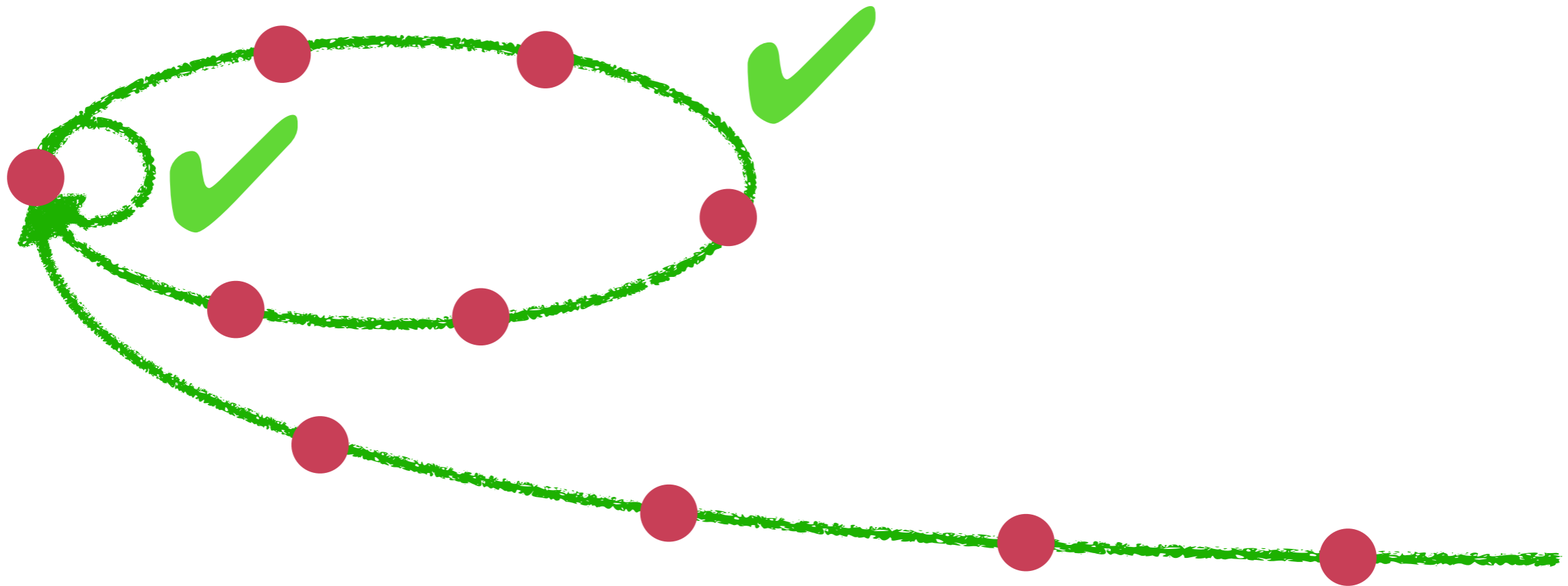
no infinite
justification

every justifier must itself have a justifier =
(JUST)

the Agrippan trilemma (v.1 and v.2)



avoiding scepticism (Agrippa v.1)



~~no self-justification~~

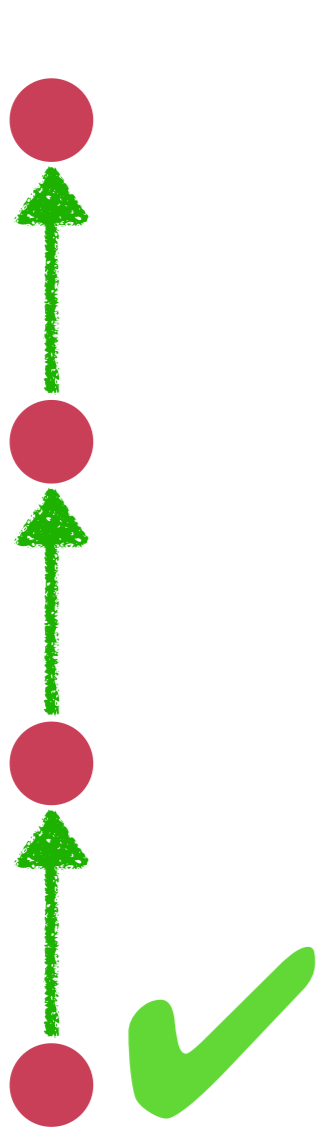
~~no circular justification~~

no infinite justification

foundationalism
v.1

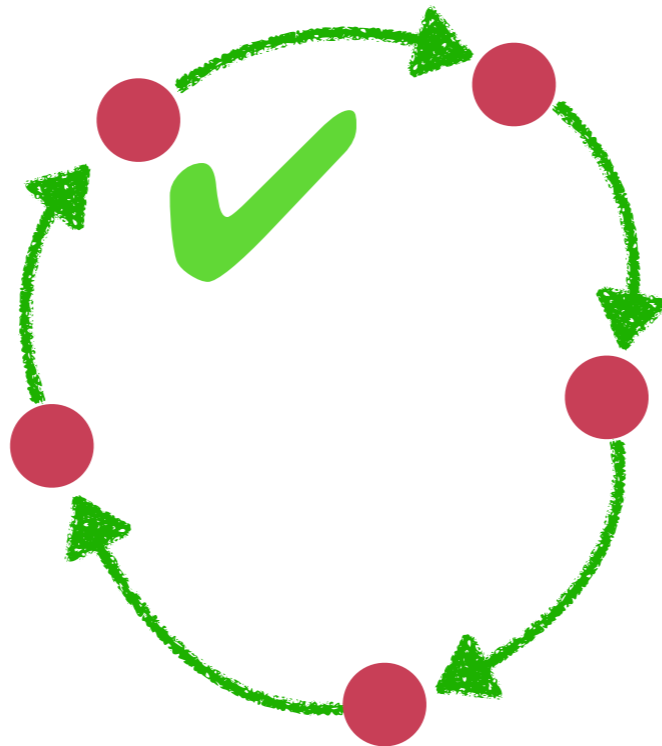
coherentism

avoiding scepticism (Agrippa v.2)



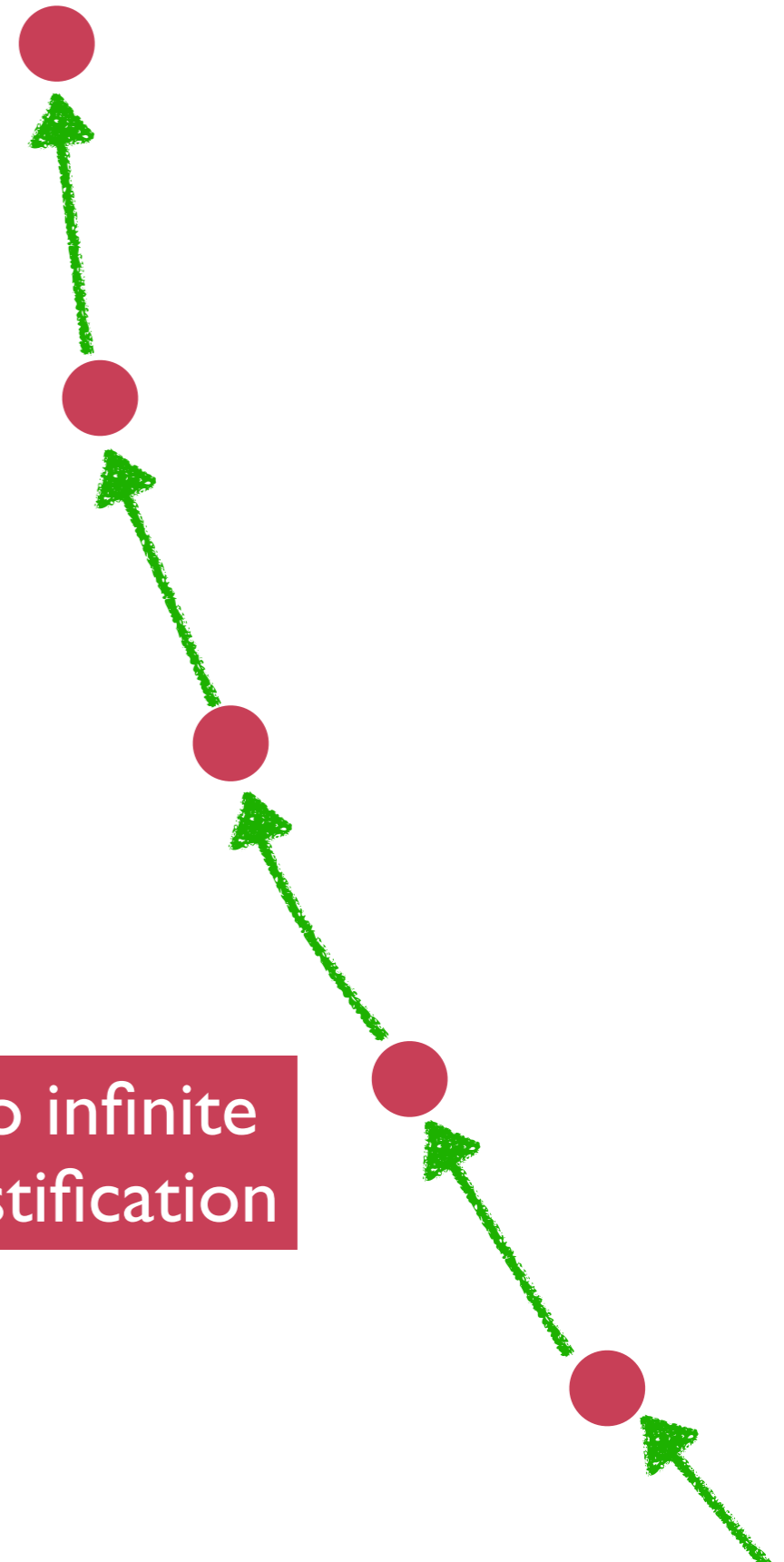
~~no terminating justification~~

foundationalism
v.2



~~no circular justification~~

coherentism



no infinite justification

coherentism

some structures involving circularity can provide justification

such structures provide justification if they are 'coherent'

it is the structure (system) that is justified;
individual beliefs get their justification from being part of the
system (BonJour)

coherentism

N.B. the coherentist theory of **justification** is **not** the same as the coherentist theory of **truth**

the two theories can be combined (e.g. British Idealists)

coherentism

what is coherence?

and

how does coherence provide justification?

coherentism

what is coherence?

coherence has been articulated in different ways

they all involve take coherence to involve positive connections between beliefs in the system: logical entailment, probability raising, explanation etc.

logical consistency is not enough for coherence

coherentism

what is coherence?

a system of propositions (beliefs) is coherent to the extent that the propositions:

- are logically consistency (minimal condition)
- give mutual probabilistic support
- possess inferential connections between them
- cannot be subdivided into separate systems
- do not include unexplained anomalies

coherentism

the isolation problem

justification should indicate truth

does coherence indicate truth?

objection: coherence is an entirely internal set of relations, and does not indicate any correlation with the external world

coherentism

BonJour's response to the isolation problem

we have 'cognitively spontaneous beliefs'
(e.g. beliefs)

these supply a connection with the world

but their justification comes from their
coherence with the system of beliefs

coherentism

but their justification comes from their coherence with the system of beliefs

if so, then it is not clear how the isolation problem goes away

on the other hand, if they have some special justificatory status, then is this view really coherentism—or is it a form of foundationalism?

foundationalism

foundationalism
v.1

~~no self-
justification~~

some beliefs
are self-
justifying

foundationalism
v.2

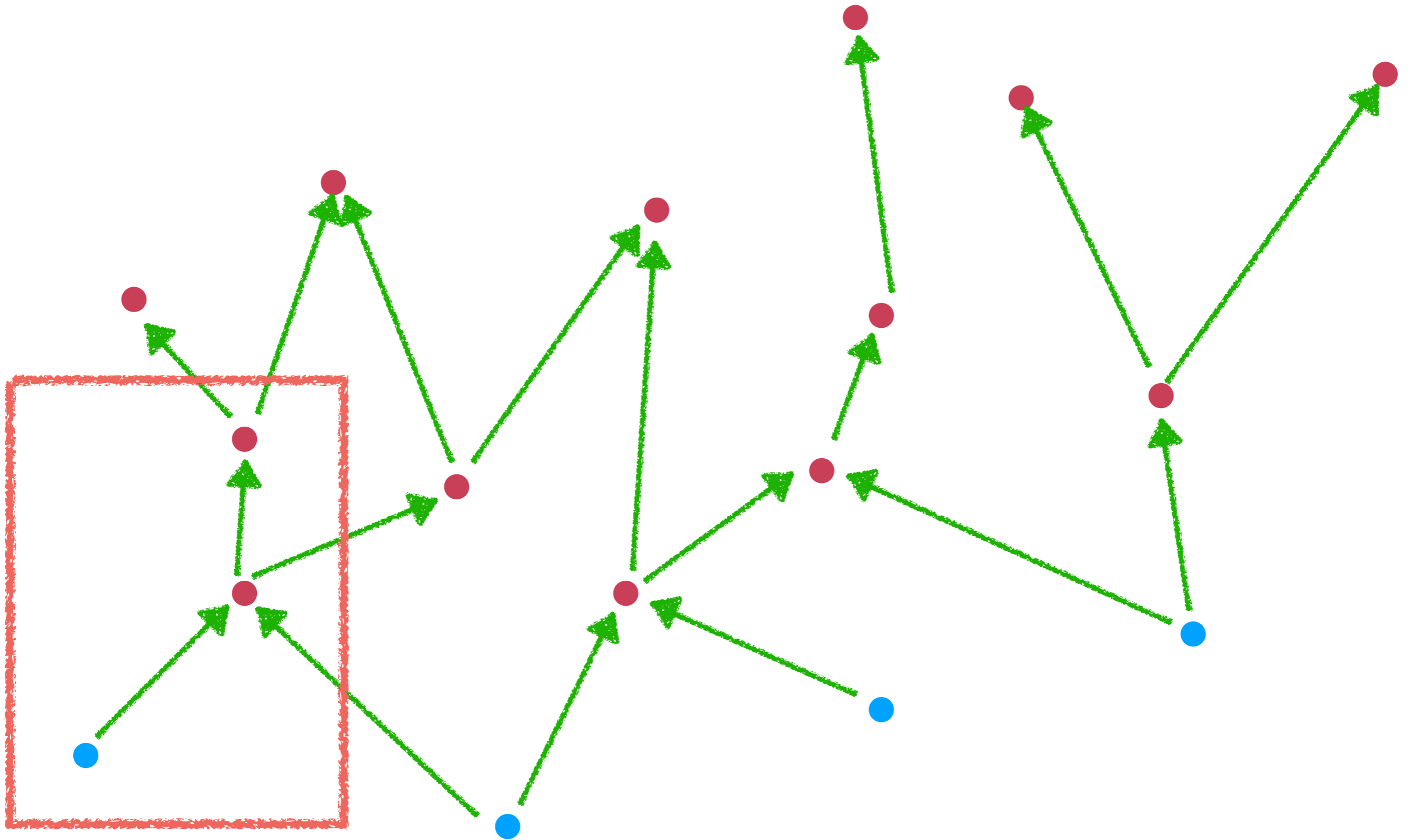
~~no terminating
justification~~

some beliefs
are justifiers
without being
justified

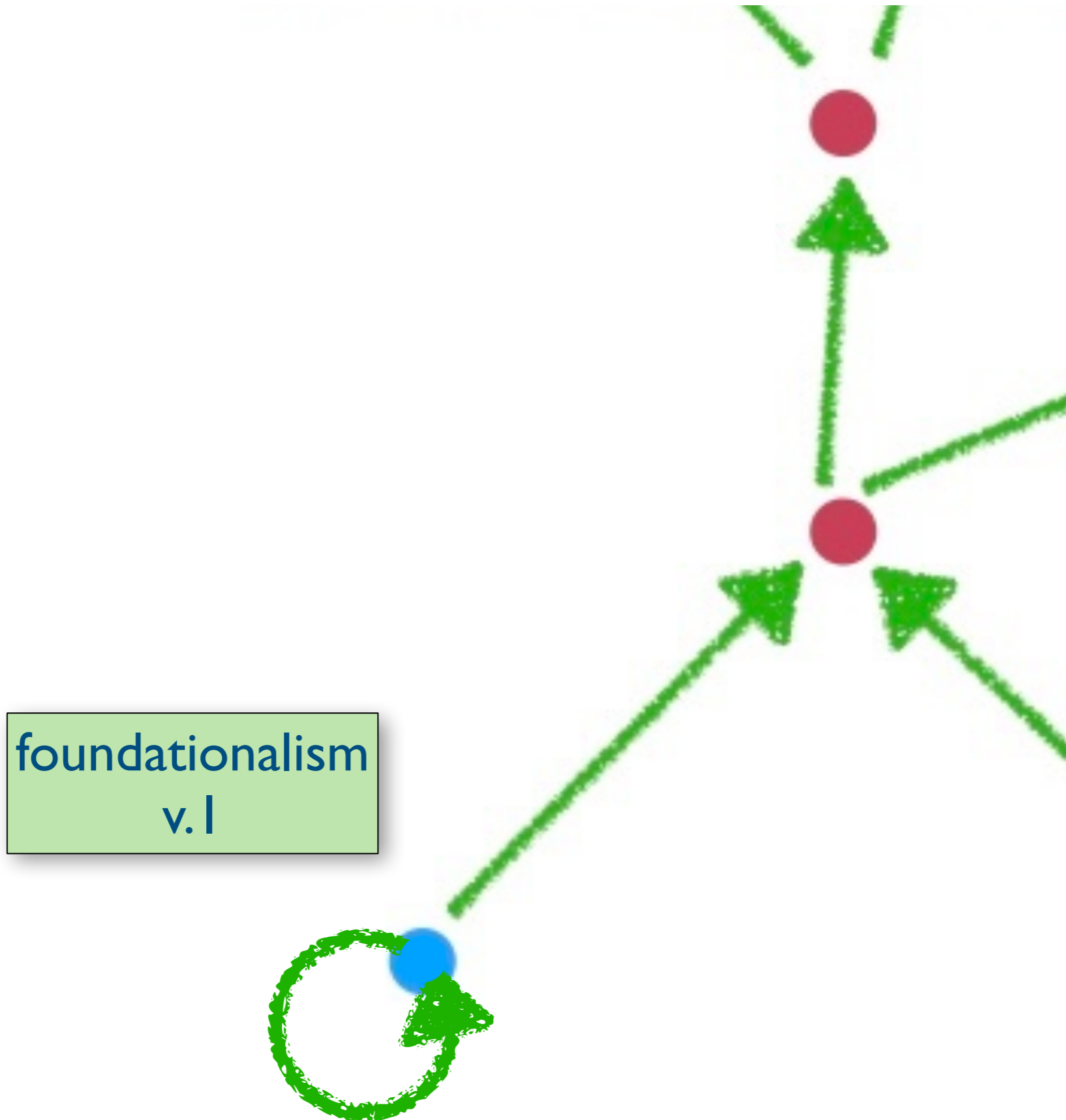


some beliefs are basic/foundational in the structure of justification

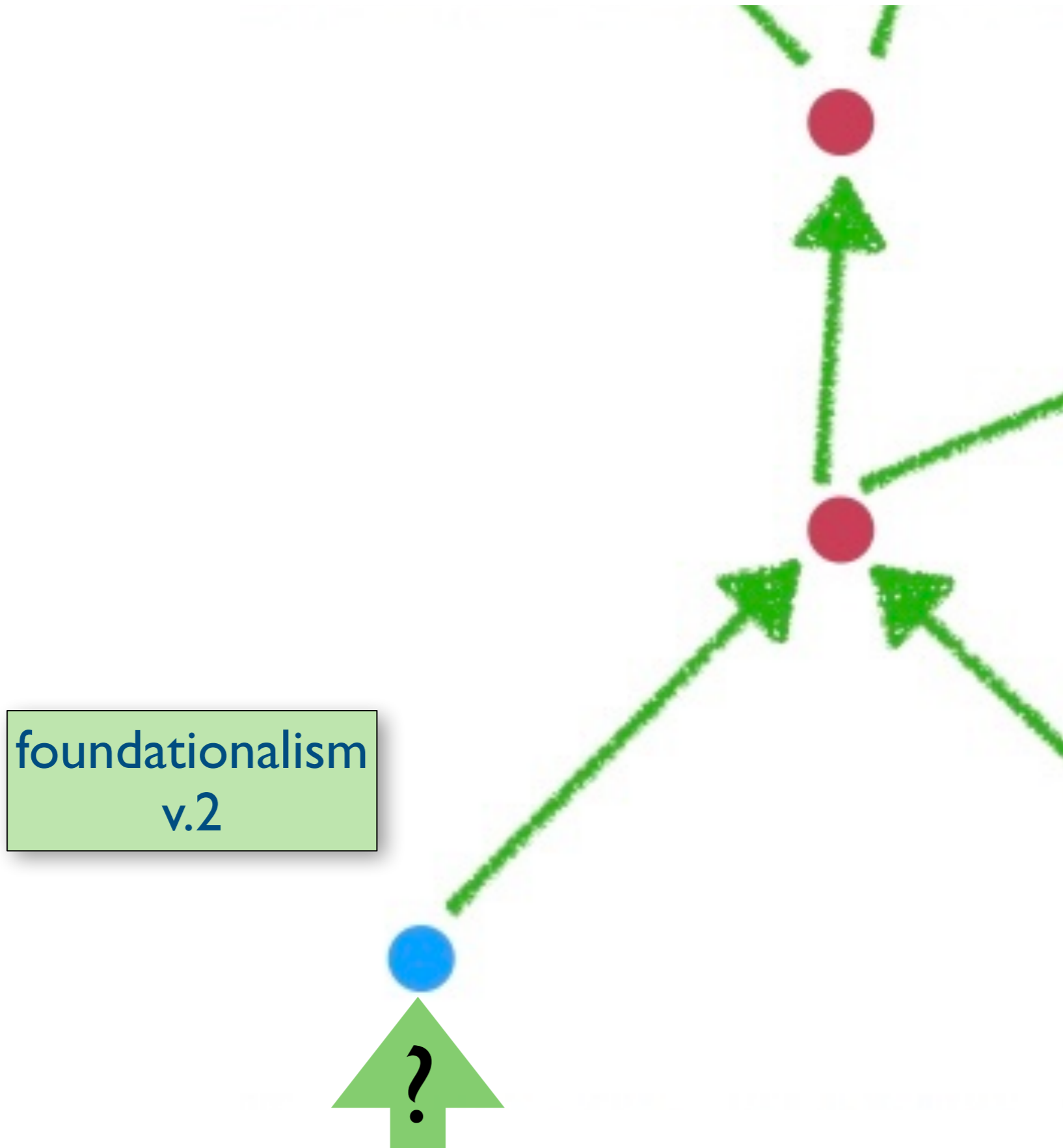
foundationalism



foundationalism



foundationalism



foundationalism

foundationalism
v. I

~~no self-
justification~~

some beliefs are self-
justifying

which beliefs are self justifying?

foundationalism

self-justifying beliefs

beliefs whose existence entails that they are true:
'I exist', 'I think', 'I have at least one belief'

self-evident

a priori beliefs: mathematical, logical truths;
conceptual truths, etc.

beliefs about one's own internal (mental states)?
e.g. beliefs about appearances

beliefs whose existence entails that they are
justified (?) perceptual beliefs etc.

foundationalism

self-justifying beliefs

but are these enough to provide a foundation for empirical knowledge of the external world?

foundationalism

foundationalism
v.2

no terminating
justification

some beliefs are justifiers
without being justified by
another belief

where does this justification come from?

internalism and externalism

(JUST) If S is justified in believing proposition p then, for some proposition q , S is justified in believing q and q supports p .

Only a belief can be a reason for a belief (Davidson)

(EVI) S is justified in believing proposition p if S 's evidence supports p .

if reason = justification, and evidence = belief/knowledge then all these say that justification is a matter of relations among one's beliefs

internalism and externalism

internalism

internalism (v.I): justification supervenes on subject's internal, mental states

'mentalism' (or 'mentalist internalism')

internalism and externalism

internalism

justification as having reasons:
why do you believe that p ?

internalism and externalism

internalism

internalism (v.2): the grounds of justification must be transparent to the subject

'access internalism'

internalism and externalism

externalism

denial of internalism

externalism (v.1): justification does not supervene on the subject's internal, mental states

externalism (v.2): the grounds of justification need not be transparent to the subject

internalism and externalism

externalism

what provides knowledge/justification may in part be external to the subject's mind and inaccessible to them

e.g. causal theory of knowledge, reliabilism

internalism and externalism

causal theory of knowledge

S knows that p iff S has a belief that p caused by the fact that p

assume knowledge entails justification,
then the subject has a justified belief that p in virtue of a
causal relation that is external to their mental states and to
which they may have no access

internalism and externalism

reliabilist theory of justification

S is justified in believing p iff S's belief that p is brought about by a reliable (truth-conducive) method of belief formation

the reliability of the method of belief formation will typically be external to the subject

internalism and externalism

externalism

in favour of externalism:

- allows unreflective subjects to have knowledge/justification (re access internalism)
- avoids scepticism
- bypasses issues of the structure of justification (is a modest kind of foundationalism v.2)
- can be supported by naturalism

internalism and externalism

externalism

against externalism:

- makes justification independent of having good reasons, being rational
- runs into objections such as Norman the clairvoyant

BonJour, L. (1980). Externalist theories of empirical knowledge. In French, P., Uehling Jr., T., and Wettstein, H., editors, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy V: Studies in Epistemology*, pages 53–74. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

reading

see reading list at: http://www.alexanderbird.org/Teaching/Reading_lists.pdf