

# BONJOUR'S 'BASIC ANTIFOUNDATIONALIST ARGUMENT' AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE GIVEN

Daniel Howard-Snyder

*In Southern Journal of Philosophy, 1998*

Laurence Bonjour observes that critics of foundationalism tend to argue against it by objecting to "relatively idiosyncratic" versions of it, a strategy which has "proven in the main to be superficial and ultimately ineffective" since answers immune to the objections emerge quickly (1985: 17). He aims to rectify this deficiency. Specifically, he argues that the very soul of foundationalism, "the concept of a basic empirical belief," is incoherent (1985: 30). This is a bold strategy from which we can learn even if, in the end, as I shall argue, it fails.

But, first, what is foundationalism? A person's belief is 'nonbasic' just in case it is justified in virtue of its relation to other justified beliefs; it is 'basic' just in case it is justified but not in virtue of its relation to other justified beliefs. Foundationalism is the view that if one has a nonbasic belief, then--in the final analysis--it is justified in virtue of its relation to a basic belief. Basic beliefs comprise the foundation of a person's network of justified beliefs. Now to Bonjour's argument.

## 1. THE ARGUMENT STATED

Bonjour summarizes his argument like this:

1. Suppose, for reductio, that there are basic empirical beliefs.
2. A belief is justified only if there is a reason why it is likely to be true.
3. A belief is justified for a person only if he is in cognitive possession of such a reason.
4. A person is in cognitive possession of such a reason only if he believes with justification the premises from which it follows that the belief is likely to be true.
5. The premises of such a justifying argument must include at least one empirical premise.
6. So, the justification of a supposed basic empirical belief depends on the justification of at least one other empirical belief, contradicting 1.
7. So, there can be no basic empirical beliefs. (1985: 32, lightly edited)

What should we make of this argument?

Bonjour says foundationalists will attack premise 3 or 4 (1985: 32-33). But consider premise 2. Many epistemologists think a belief can be justified for a person even if there *is* no reason why it is likely to be true. Recall those who use demon-world scenarios to argue against reliabilism, e.g. Ginet 1985 and Feldman 1985. Of course, a foundationalist could take this line too. So as my student, Corrigan Clay, put

the point, why can't the foundationalist just reject premise 2 and thereby avoid Bonjour's labyrinthine discussions of premises 3 and 4? Indeed, given his aim "to formulate an objection to all foundationalist views" (Bonjour 1985: 17), premise 2 looks like a colossal oversight.

As it turns out, however, premise 2 is not essential. For suppose there *is* no reason that makes one's belief likely to be true; still, it might be argued, one cannot be justified unless it at least *seems* to one that there is such a reason. In that case, we can dispense with 2, read 3 as "A belief is justified for a person only if he is in cognitive possession of what *seems* to him to be a reason why it is likely to be true," and read 4 as "A person is in cognitive possession of such a reason only if he believes with justification the premises from which it *seems* to him to follow that the belief is likely to be true"; the rest of the argument would proceed as is. So one can arrive at Bonjour's conclusion without 2. Since my main concerns lie elsewhere however, I will proceed as though 2 is true.

## 2. TWO OBJECTIONS

My objection to Bonjour's argument is simply this: it begs the question and, waiving that worry, it leads straight to global skepticism.

### 2.1 Premise 3 begs the question

Consider premise 3. What is it for a person to be 'in cognitive possession' of a reason why one's belief is likely to be true? Bonjour says that "in order for B to be justified for a particular person A..., it is necessary...that A himself be in cognitive possession of that justification, that is, that he *believe* the appropriate premises of forms (1) and (2)...," specifically,

1. B has feature  $\emptyset$ .
2. Beliefs having feature  $\emptyset$  are highly likely to be true.
3. Therefore, B is highly likely to be true. [1]

So premise 3 is just the claim that a belief is justified for a person only if she believes the premises of a justifying argument. Foundationalism is the denial of this claim. Thus, premise 3 begs the question. [2]

Bonjour argues for premise 3, however. That argument is a *more* basic antifoundationalist argument than the one Bonjour labels as such. I evaluate it in section 3 below.

### 2.2 Premises 3 and 4 jointly entail global skepticism

According to Bonjour, merely believing the premises of a justifying argument is not enough. Premise 4 says one must believe those premises 'with justification'. Thus, premises 3 and 4 entail what I call 'Bonjour's Rule':

A person's belief that p is justified only if she justifiedly believes both that (i) her belief that p has

$\emptyset$  and (ii) beliefs having  $\emptyset$  are highly likely to be true.

Note that Bonjour's Rule is perfectly general, so it applies to the beliefs mentioned in conditions (i) and (ii); moreover, it is reiterative, so it entails that a person's belief that  $p$  at a time is justified only if she has infinitely many other justified beliefs of a certain sort at that time. Two worries arise: given our present cognitive powers, humans cannot have *infinitely many* beliefs at once and, even if we could, the type of beliefs generated by the reiterative application of the Rule are too complex for us to grasp them all. Thus, if Bonjour's Rule is true, we justifiedly believe nothing since we lack the capacities it requires.

The skepticism latent in Bonjour's basic antifoundationalist argument renders it epistemologically self-defeating. Given premises 3 and 4, we get Bonjour's Rule; Bonjour's Rule entails that we cannot justifiedly believe anything; in that case, we don't justifiedly believe that premises of his argument. So, even if his argument is sound, it gives us no justifying reason to reject foundationalism. We can sensibly think otherwise only if we think premise 3 or 4 is false.

### 2.3 Four replies

*Reply 1.* Bonjour is aware of the objection that his premises have skeptical consequences. What has he to say in reply? He admits that the text suggests that the justifying argument one must have "must always take the form of an explicit metabelief". But this is not what he meant, he says:

What matters, of course, is that I have a reason of some sort for thinking that a belief...is likely to be true. Such a reason need not be couched in *explicitly* metadoxastic terms, though as far as I can see it would always be possible in any particular instance to recast it in such a form. Thus the demand for such a reason does not generate an infinite hierarchy of metabeliefs.... (1989a: 276-77, my emphasis)

True enough, the Rule does not imply that a person's belief is justified only if she *explicitly* believes the premises of a justifying argument. But it does not follow that the Rule does not require "an infinite hierarchy of metabeliefs"; for, unless one at least *tacitly* or *dispositionally* or *non-occurently* believes the premises of a justifying argument, one breaks the Rule. The specter of skepticism cannot be turned away so easily.

*Reply 2.* Perhaps we can meet Bonjour's Rule by *dispositionally* believing the premises of a justifying argument. Indeed, since one's dispositionally believing a proposition just *is* to be such that one would affirm it sincerely and unhesitatingly were one to consider it, and since we have infinitely many such dispositions, then we *can* have infinitely many beliefs at once.

This reply fails. First, a dispositional belief is not a disposition to believe. While we frequently do believe what we are disposed sincerely and unhesitatingly to affirm and our believing a proposition sometimes best explains that disposition, it does not follow that a dispositional belief *is* a disposition to believe. In fact, these are not the same state. Suppose I am talking too loudly in a quiet restaurant. Although I would

sincerely and without hesitation agree that I am talking too loudly were it brought to my attention, I may not dispositionally believe (or disbelieve) this. [3]

Second, even if we can have infinitely many beliefs at once, we cannot have infinitely many beliefs *of the sort required by BonJour's Rule*, namely justified metabeliefs. Allow me to explain.

Take some mundane perceptual belief, say, my belief that

B. There is a cup before me.

According to the Rule, I justifiedly believe B only if I justifiedly believe that my belief that B has feature  $\emptyset$  and beliefs having  $\emptyset$  are highly likely to be true. Suppose, just for the sake of illustration, that feature  $\emptyset$  is the only feature in virtue of which a belief is highly likely to be true. (This simplifying assumption is doubtless false, but it makes my point easier to see.) And let us focus on my belief that

B1. My belief that B--i.e. my belief that there is a cup before me--has  $\emptyset$ .

Of course, my believing B1 might be tacit or dispositional. But whether I believe B1 tacitly or explicitly, I must believe B1 if I am to believe B in accordance with the Rule, and I must believe B1 *justifiedly*. Since I must believe B1 justifiedly, the Rule applies to my believing B1. Thus, my belief that B--there is a cup before me--is justified only if I justifiedly believe the premises of another justifying argument which, given BonJour's Rule, includes the premise that

B2. My belief that B1--i.e., my belief that [my belief that there is a cup before me has  $\emptyset$ ]--itself has  $\emptyset$ .

By parity of reasoning, I must also justifiedly believe that

B3. My belief that B2--i.e., my belief that [my belief that [my belief that there is a cup before me has  $\emptyset$ ]--has  $\emptyset$ ,

and

B4. My belief that B3--i.e., my belief that [my belief that [my belief that [my belief that there is a cup before me has  $\emptyset$ ]--has  $\emptyset$ ,

and so on, ad infinitum. Again, none of my metabeliefs here must be explicit in order to meet the strictures of the Rule; it suffices if they are tacit, non-occurrent, dispositional. And on the view we are now evaluating, that comes to the claim that for *each* of the infinitely many propositions indicated here, *if* I were to consider it, I would sincerely and unhesitatingly affirm it. That conditional claim must be true if I justifiedly believe B--that there is a cup before me--given BonJour's Rule, glossed by the view under evaluation.

The first worry here is that it is absolutely impossible for me to grasp, much less consider, all but a handful of the propositions generated by the Rule. Let  $n$  be the number of nanoseconds since the Big Bang, to the  $n$ -th power. It seems dubious that there is a possible world at which I even grasp, much less consider,  $B_n$ . In that case, it is at best trivially true that I would sincerely and unhesitatingly affirm  $B_n$  *if* I were to entertain it--trivially true because anything follows from an impossibility of this sort. Suppose I am wrong about this. The claim in question--i.e., that for *each* of the infinitely many propositions indicated above, *if* I were to consider it, I would sincerely and unhesitatingly affirm it--still seems false. For suppose I consider, say,  $B_4$ , right now. Although it taxes my ability to concentrate and it is difficult to grasp, I can--just barely--get a grip on it, for a fleeting moment or two (I think, I'm not sure; but suppose I do). Do I sincerely and unhesitatingly affirm it? Of course not! I can barely comprehend it. So the conditional claim in question is false. Moreover, even if I did affirm  $B_4$ , BonJour's Rule would not be met since, given my difficulty in even understanding what  $B_4$  says, I would not be *justified* in affirming it. For both of these reasons, if BonJour's Rule is true, then my belief that  $B$ --that there is a cup before me--like any other mundane perceptual belief of mine, is not justified. Generalizing, the Rule does not avoid skepticism even if dispositional beliefs are dispositions to believe and we can have infinitely many dispositional beliefs. [4]

*Reply 3.* A completely different response to my contention that the Rule entails skepticism is to modify the premises of the basic antifoundationalist argument so that they do not entail it. For example, one might restrict premise 3 to basic beliefs--"A *basic* belief is justified for a person only if she is in cognitive possession of such a reason"--from which, in conjunction with 4, we get 'BonJour's Rule\*':

A person's *basic* belief that  $p$  is justified only if she justifiedly believes both that (i) her belief that  $p$  has  $\emptyset$  and (ii) beliefs having  $\emptyset$  are highly likely to be true. [5]

Unfortunately, this modification of premise 3 is *ad hoc*; there is no principled way to restrict the 'cognitive possession' of a justifying argument to basic beliefs. Indeed, nonbasic beliefs are more natural candidates for the Rule since their justification is derived from other beliefs. Moreover, BonJour's explicit reason for endorsing premise 3 applies to nonbasic belief just as well as to basic belief, if it applies to either (1985: 31; section 3 below).

*Reply 4.* Another reply distinguishes the claim that a person must believe with justification the premises of a justifying argument from the claim that a person must be justified *were* she to believe those premises. [6] That is, we might read premise 4 as

A person is in cognitive possession of such a reason only if she *would* believe with justification the premises from which it follows that the belief is likely to be true, *were* she to believe them,

which in conjunction with premise 3 gives us 'BonJour's Rule\*\*':

A person's belief that  $p$  is justified only if she *would* justifiedly believe that (i) her belief that  $p$  has  $\emptyset$  and (ii) beliefs having  $\emptyset$  are highly likely to be true, *were* she to believe them.

It is arguable that difficulties analogous to those for the dispositional account of the infinite belief thesis arise here. More importantly, however, note that the condition expressed by the new premise 4 and Bonjour's Rule\*\* can be met *without* one believing, even tacitly, the premises of a justifying argument. Thus, if we use the new 4, Bonjour's argument becomes invalid. All that follows is that the justification of a person's basic belief depends on the fact that she *would* justifiably believe propositions (i) and (ii) *were* she to consider them. That conclusion is compatible with the idea that basic empirical beliefs are justified beliefs whose justification does not depend on the justification of any further *actual beliefs*. So even if this response removes skepticism's sting, the cost is prohibitive: an invalid argument.

I see no way to fix Bonjour's 'basic antifoundationalist argument' so that it supports its conclusion without either begging the question or entailing global skepticism. Let's return to premise 3 and examine his argument for it. Perhaps there we can find a more telling antifoundationalist case.

### 3. BONJOUR'S DEFENSE OF PREMISE 3

Premise 3 says that a person justifiably believes something only if he is in cognitive possession of a reason that makes his belief highly likely to be true. Now, why believe this? Because, says Bonjour, a person "cannot be epistemically responsible in accepting the belief unless *he himself* has access to the justification; for otherwise, *he* has no reason for thinking that the belief is at all likely to be true" (1985: 31). The idea is this: if one is to be epistemically responsible in believing a proposition, one must have access to a reason for thinking it is true. Given Bonjour's gloss on 'access', 'cognitive possession', and 'reason', we have the claim that epistemically responsible belief requires believing justifiably the premises of a justifying argument. Leaving aside worries about the propriety of applying deontological concepts to beliefs, [7] if this claim is true, there can be no basic beliefs--foundationalism is false. This claim, however, is dubious at best.

First, I can believe responsibly even if there *is* no justifying argument. Suppose I try as hard as I can to discover whether p is true; upon careful investigation, it seems to me that I have found a knockdown argument. In that case, I am not blameworthy for believing p if--contrary to appearances--the argument turns on a subtle error and, in fact, there is no good argument for p. For, I have done everything in my power to get at the truth.

Bonjour rejects my contention here in the following passage:

. . . if a candidate contingent belief possesses no feature satisfying this schema [ = (i) my belief that p has  $\emptyset$  and (ii) beliefs having  $\emptyset$  are highly likely to be true], then I have no good reason for thinking that it is true--and hence would be epistemically irresponsible, not properly attentive to the cognitive goal of finding the truth, in accepting it. (1989a: 276)

This line of thought is equivalent to the following argument: "If I am epistemically responsible in believing p, I have a good reason for thinking it is true; if I have a good reason for thinking p is true, my

belief has some feature satisfying the schema; so, by hypothetical syllogism, . . ."

But what does 'good reason for thinking that it is true' mean here? Clearly, Bonjour means a reason which *in fact* makes my belief highly likely to be true, for only then could the fact that my reason is 'good' entail that my belief satisfies the schema. In that case, the first premise is false. For I am not responsible for that over which I have no control, and I have no control over whether my reason is 'good' in the sense that it *in fact* makes my belief highly likely to be true. All I can do is try my best to get in a position to find the truth and, having done that, the rest is out of my control. So epistemically responsible believing does not imply that my reason for believing in fact makes my belief highly likely to be true. On the other hand, if I *can* have a 'good reason' for thinking that p is true which does *not* make my belief highly likely to be true, then the fact that my reason is 'good' does *not* entail that my belief satisfies the schema--in which case the second premise is false.

The second reason to deny Bonjour's claim that epistemically responsible believing requires justifiedly believing the premises of a justifying argument is this: even if there is such an argument, I can believe responsibly without believing *it*. For example, suppose I believe that I exist on the basis of no grounds at all, propositional or nonpropositional. I believe it, say, because, unbeknownst to me, it is biologically guaranteed by God or Nature. In that case, I cannot rid myself of it. Surely I am not irresponsible if I continue to believe I exist. What else *can* I do?

Third, if epistemically responsible believing entails premise 3--that I justifiedly believe something only if I justifiedly believe the premises of a justifying argument--then, given the reiterative nature of that premise and the skepticism it induces (section 2.2 above), I am irresponsible unless I have infinitely many justified metabeliefs or believe nothing. I can do neither. So, since I am responsible only for what I can do, epistemically responsible believing does not entail premise 3. [8]

Crucial to my case here is the fact that I have not rejected the propriety of applying deontological concepts to believing. We may well have all sorts of epistemic duties vis-a-vis our beliefs even if it is false that, for any belief we hold, we have a duty to justifiedly believe the premises of an argument which makes that belief highly likely to be true. I have only argued that we do not have *this* duty, Bonjour's duty.

So much for Bonjour's argument *for* premise 3. What might be offered *against* it?

#### 4. THE DOCTRINE OF THE GIVEN

Foundationalists offer the epistemic regress argument, modified to display the defects of coherentism. I need not rehearse it here. Recall that it concludes that we are justified in believing empirical propositions only if there are basic beliefs. Bonjour is perplexed by this suggestion: "On what basis is such a belief supposed to be justified, once any appeal to further empirical premises is ruled out?" (1985: 30). Foundationalists answer differently. The most famous answer in this century is that 'the given' provides such a basis. Bonjour rejects this answer, arguing that "the idea of the given *in general*" is incoherent

(1985: 59, my emphasis). For many of us who think foundationalism *cum* the given is the only viable foundationalist option--or, at least the most plausible one--Bonjour's argument against the doctrine of the given constitutes yet another 'basic antifoundationalist argument'. In this section I examine it.

The doctrine of the given is understood in various ways. To assess Bonjour's argument against it we need to have before us its central thesis. It will prove instructive to get at it by way of Bonjour's discussion of the matter.

#### 4.1 Bonjour's characterization of the given

Bonjour writes that, in the context of the epistemic regress argument,

...the central thesis of the doctrine of the given is that basic empirical beliefs are justified, not by appeal to further beliefs or merely external facts but rather by appeal to states of "immediate experience" or "direct apprehension" or "intuition"--states which allegedly can confer justification without themselves requiring justification....

He continues:

How exactly is this to be understood? If the basic belief whose justification is at issue is the belief that P, then according to the most straightforward version of the doctrine, this basic belief is justified by appeal to an immediate experience of the very fact or state of affairs or situation which it asserts to obtain: the fact that P. It is because I immediately experience the very fact which would make my belief true that I am completely justified in holding it, and it is this fact which is given. Immediate experience thus brings the regress of justification to an end by making possible a direct comparison between the basic belief and its object. (1985: 59-60)

Although Bonjour is initially near the mark, he develops the central thesis of the doctrine of the given in three potentially misleading ways.

First, he says that "the most straightforward version of the doctrine" involves the claim that a basic belief is justified" *by appeal* to an immediate experience of the very fact or state of affairs or situation which it asserts to obtain" (my emphasis). This characterization of the doctrine is ambiguous. On the one hand, it might mean that *a person's* basic belief is justified only if *he* appeals to some experiential state; on the other hand, it might mean that *the proponent of the given* appeals to some experiential state to explain how a basic belief can be justified. Understood the first way, Bonjour characterizes the proponent of the given as either failing to distinguish justifying one's belief that a proposition is true (the *activity* of justifying) from being justified in believing it (the *state* of being justified), or insisting that one cannot be justified without showing that one is justified. Neither of these mistakes is central to the doctrine of the given. Understood the second way, however, Bonjour is correct.



Second, the proponent of the given may, but need not, claim that the given stops the epistemic regress "by making possible a direct *comparision* between the basic belief and its object" (my emphasis). She may hold that even if an experiential state does not permit one to compare one's belief with its object, it can still figure in rendering one's belief justified.

Third, the proponent of the given may, but need not, claim that "because I immediately experience the very fact which would make my belief true. . . I am *completely* justified in holding it" (my emphasis). She may hold that even if my experiential state does not suffice to render my belief completely justified, it can contribute to its being completely justified. Put another way, proponents of the given can say that an experiential state can completely justify a person's belief only if other conditions are met, e.g., she is inculpably unaware of any defeaters. And this is what they typically do say.

So, the central doctrine of the given involves neither (a) the claim that one's basic belief is justified only if *one appeals* to experiential states, nor (b) the claim that such states make it possible to *compare* one's belief with the state of affairs that makes one's belief true, nor (c) the claim that such states render one's basic belief *completely* justified. Rather, the central thesis is simply that experience can play a crucial role in how it is that a basic belief can be justified and thereby end the regress. Anything more than that is to take sides in a domestic squabble between proponents of the given. Thus, the central thesis is compatible with many variations ranging from the artsy and once fashionable "what is given in experience are 'phenomenal entities' ('sense-data') and basic beliefs are infallible or certain or self-justifying 'statements' about them" [9] to the mundane "what is given by way of experience are physical objects, and basic beliefs are about them."

## 4.2 Bonjour's argument against the given

BonJour aims to refute "the idea of the given in general"; he thus attacks its central thesis. What's his argument? At the end of each discussion of particular versions of the doctrine of the given (1985: 64-65, 69, 78), he offers a dilemma, the upshot of which is this:

1. Either an experiential state has representational content or it doesn't.
2. If it does, it is in need of justification itself.
3. If it doesn't, then it cannot contribute to the justification of a belief.
4. An experiential state can end the regress only if it can contribute to the justification of a belief and it is not in need of justification itself.
5. So, an experiential state cannot end the regress.

Premise 2 is pretty clearly false. [10] For if an experiential state were in need of justification because it has representational content, then every cognitive state with content would be in need of justification. But this consequence false. My imagining what life would be like if I were a monk has content but needs no justification. Similarly for wondering whether, entertaining, hypothesizing, being ambivalent about, hoping, having a visual experience (perhaps), and many other types of cognitive states.

What has gone wrong here? The best diagnosis I can come up with is this. Quite controversially, let us suppose with BonJour both that every cognitive state has representational content and that representational content is propositionally structured. [11] Now, recall that different states play different functional roles. One important distinction between different kinds of roles is that while some types of cognitive states, notably beliefs, are 'assertive'--that is, they involve what might be analogically described as a commitment to the truth of a proposition or the obtaining of a state of affairs--others are 'nonassertive', e.g. those mentioned in the last paragraph. And here an important fact emerges. An *assertive* cognitive state *needs* to be justified because, and only because, it involves a commitment to the truth or obtaining of its content. A *nonassertive* cognitive state, however, involves no such commitment and so it does *not* need to be justified. It is not the content of a state like belief that entails its need to be justified; it is its assertive aspect. Thus, since an experiential state has no assertive aspect, it does not need to be justified even if it has a representational content. In short, BonJour seems to have confused the assertive character of a belief with its representational content, thereby wrongly inferring that any state with content is in need of epistemic justification.

Now, BonJour might object that so long as an experiential state *plays a role in the justification of a belief*, the question of whether there is any reason to think that its content is accurate or correct can be legitimately raised. And without a positive answer to this question the capacity of such a state to contribute to a belief's justification is decisively undermined (1985: 78).

We must exercise caution here. Suppose there *is* a positive answer to the question of whether the content of some (token) experiential state accurately represents 'nonconceptual reality', as BonJour puts it. Is that state then able to contribute crucially to a belief's justification and end the epistemic regress? Presumably, BonJour--or, at any rate, the BonJour of *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*--will say 'no'. Rather, he will probably say that not only must there *be* an answer, a reason to think that the content of an experiential state is accurate, but one must *have* it, as he does with respect to belief: it is necessary, not merely that a reason exist in the abstract but also that you yourself be in cognitive possession of that reason, that is, that you believe that reason and this belief be justified for you. (Compare 1985: 31.) This suggestion is tantamount to the following thesis:

An experiential state can play a role in conferring justification on one's belief only if one justifiedly believes that the content of that state is accurate, correct.

What should we make of this thesis?

Read one way, it seems trivially true and harmless for the doctrine of the given. Suppose I justifiedly believe there's a cup in front of me on the basis of an experiential state the content of which is that there is a cup in front of me. Don't I then justifiedly believe that the content of that state is accurate, correct? Clearly this reading of the suggested thesis has no teeth. A reading with more bite requires that I have a justified belief *about* my experiential state, *under that description*, specifically that *its* content accurately represents nonconceptual reality.

With this reading in mind, consider, first, the perspective it requires: on the one hand, there is my

experiential state with its content; on the other hand, there is nonconceptual reality; now, by comparing the two, I am supposed to be able to tell whether the first accurately represents the second. Of course, this is a pipe-dream. There is no such first-person perspective from which such a comparison can be made; and even if there were, it would involve yet another experiential state and the demand would be reiterated, ad infinitum. The fundamental question here, then, is this: why accept this condition on the justificatory role of experiential states in the first place? Why suppose that in order for a nonassertive experiential state to contribute crucially to the justification of one's belief one has to be able to tell whether its content matches up with nonconceptual reality? Once we distinguish assertive from nonassertive representational states and note that the former but not the latter need to be epistemically justified, it is difficult to see what can be said on behalf of this supposition.

## 5. CONCLUSION

For all I have argued, the doctrine of the given deserves the derision it has received lately. More generally, nothing I have said precludes a sensible rejection of foundationalism. I hope to have shown, however, that we can reject neither for Bonjour's reasons. [12]

## NOTES

[1] 31, my emphasis. Moreover, Bonjour describes those who *deny* premise 3 of the basic antifoundationalist argument as those who say that "it is not necessary that the person for whom the belief is basic know, or justifiably believe, *or even believe at all*, the premises of such an argument" (32, my emphasis). And, responding to his critics, he writes: "if I am not justified in *believing* that I have such a reason, then I do not genuinely *have* it..." (1989a, 277, my emphasis).

[2] For corroboration on this point, see McGrew 1995, 63-64; Kelley 1986, 198, and Alston 1989, p. 73. McGrew and Kelley say premise 4 is the culprit, but given what Bonjour means by 'cognitive possession', it's premise 3.

[3] For more on the infinite belief thesis, see Foley 1978, 311-312, Fumerton 1995, 58-60, and especially Audi 1982, on whom I have relied in this paragraph. Bonjour rejects it in 1985, 23-24.

[4] I thank Frances Howard-Snyder for working out with me the argument of this paragraph.

[5] In reply to Steup 1987, Bonjour takes this approach:

It needs to be stressed, however, that the schema was formulated with putatively foundational beliefs...in mind and was not necessarily intended to generalize to all cases in which one belief provides a reason for thinking another to be true. (Bonjour 1989b, 58)

[6] Perhaps this suggestion is lurking in Bonjour 1985, as when he emphasizes that a person need only "have access" to a justifying argument (23, 31), or that it "be available" to her (19), or that she "be able in

principle to rehearse it" (19), or that it only be "tacitly or implicitly grasp[ed]" (152) or "tacitly or implicitly involved in the actual cognitive state of a person" (152). If we take such access, availability, grasp and tacit involvement as something *other* than belief (even dispositional belief), then we can understand what it is to be in "cognitive possession" of the premises of such an argument in a counterfactual fashion.

[7] See, e.g., William Alston, "Concepts of Justification" and "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," in Alston 1989.

[8] Thanks (again) to Frances Howard-Snyder for suggesting this argument to me.

[9] See, e.g., Lewis, 1946, chapter 7; Ayer, 1950; Chisholm, 1964; and Fumerton, 1995.

[10] Others object otherwise. See, e.g., Steven Rappaport, "BonJour's Objection to Traditional Foundationalism," *Dialogue* (1989), 433-448, and Evan Fales, *A Defense of the Given* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), especially pp. 150-72. Their arguments, however, rely on idiosyncratic versions of the doctrine of the given. If I'm right in this section, BonJour's argument fails for much more general reasons.

[11] William Alston has reminded me that if you read BonJour's discussion of Schlick, Quinton, and Lewis carefully, you will see that he does not even countenance the possibility that some forms of cognition are not propositionally structured. Consequently, his arguments for premise 3 of the dilemma under discussion fail to consider what may well be the most plausible versions of the doctrine of the given, namely those that permit some forms of cognition--notably perception--to be propositionally *unstructured*. Examples include Alston's "Theory of Appearing"--which recognizes a direct awareness of objects that is not propositionally structured at all, since such awareness is essentially a relation between a mind and an object--and Fred Dretske on non-epistemic seeing. See Alston's 1990, 54-59, and 2000, and Dretske's 1969, chapter 2. One might also worry about premise 3 on the grounds that purely qualitative states have no representational content but can contribute to the justification of one's belief that, say, one is itchy, drowsy, hungry, and the like.

[12] For comments on earlier drafts, I thank William Alston, Corrigan Clay, Terence Cuneo, Kevin Guilfooy, Frances Howard-Snyder, Hud Hudson, Steve Layman, John O'Leary-Hawthorne, and Paul Tidman. I benefited from reading to the Northwest Conference for Philosophy, University of Portland, 1996, where William Rottschafer, my commentator, helped me clarify some things. I am grateful to Seattle Pacific University for a sabbatical leave (1997) which supported, in part, work on this paper.

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