Bursting Bealer's Bubble: How the Starting Points Argument Begs the Question of Foundationalism Against Quine[1]

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I   Introduction

In his 1993 article George Bealer offers three separate arguments that are directed against the internal coherence of empiricism, specifically Quine's version of empiricism.[2] In doing so, Bealer identifies three fundamental principles of Quine's empiricism.[3] First, the principle of empiricism states that:

(i) A person's experiences and/or observations comprise the person's *prima facie* evidence.

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1 The authors would like to thank Edward Erwin, Tomoji Shogenji, and Michael Veber for extensive comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2 Bealer's explicit motive in attacking this sort of empiricism is to provide some initial support for a form of (moderate) rationalism (see Bealer [2000]), and these sorts of arguments have had considerable influence in the contemporary resurrection of rationalism as many of the essays in Boghossian and Peacocke (2000) attest to. Also, see BonJour (1998), Kaplan (1994), and Siegel (1984) for very similar arguments against this sort of empiricism.

3 Additionally, Quine regards conservatism, simplicity, and generality as fundamental principles.

Second, the principle of holism states that:

(ii) A theory is justified (acceptable, more reasonable than its competitors, legitimate, warranted) for a person if and only if it is, or belongs to, the simplest comprehensive theory that explains all, or most, of the person's *prima facie* evidence.

Finally, the principle of naturalism states that:

(iii) The natural sciences (plus the logic and mathematics needed by them) constitute the simplest comprehensive theory that explains all, or most, of a person's experiences and/or observations.

Granting Bealer this interpretation of Quine, we will argue here that it does not follow that Quine's empiricism is internally incoherent as his starting points argument (hereafter the SPA) alleges. Our focus in this paper will be on Bealer's SPA, which we take to be the strongest argument of the three presented in his 1993.[4] We will argue that Bealer does not show Quine's position to be incoherent, and we will demonstrate how a Quinean may successfully defend his views against Bealer's SPA.[5] Our defense of Quinean empiricism against the SPA depends on showing (1) that Bealer is, in an important sense, a foundationalist, and (2) that Quine is, in an important sense, a coherentist. Having established these two contentions we will then show that Bealer's SPA begs the question against Quinean empiricists.

II Bealer's Views of Evidence and Justification

Prior to the formal presentation of his arguments against Quine's empiricism, Bealer finds it necessary to first formulate a framework in which the arguments are to be couched. Because the grounds on which these arguments are developed are dubious, the Quinean defense we propose will begin with a careful analysis of Bealer's initial assumptions. The strength of Bealer's criticisms hinges upon whether or not Quine's

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4 A defense against Bealer's other two arguments and those offered by BonJour (1986), Kaplan (1994), and Siegel (1984) would run along the same lines as the defense sketched in this paper.

5 We want to be clear that our defense need not be regarded as an endorsement of Quinean empiricism as it is understood by Bealer, although we are broadly sympathetic to that view.

position is really committed to Bealer's views not only about what counts as evidence but also about what the nature of justification is. One of the crucial and more controversial assumptions that Bealer makes is the inclusion of intuitions as a necessary component of our standard justificatory procedures. In addition to Bealer's claim that intuitions are a significant element in our set of justificatory resources, Bealer also contends that intuitions serve as *prima facie* evidence. However, these claims seem to be in direct conflict with the stance that Bealer takes Quine to maintain.

Bealer intends that the use of intuition is to be limited considerably to a certain kind of 'seeming' that is *a priori* in nature and, despite being fallible, plays a role in both belief formation and inference.[6] He claims that,

> By intuition, we do not mean a supernatural power or a magical inner voice or anything of the sort. When you have an intuition that *A*, it *seems* to you that *A*. Here ''seems'' is understood, not in its use as a cautionary or ''hedging'' term, but in its use as a term for a genuine kind of conscious episode. (Bealer [1993], 165)

The terms that Bealer wishes intuition to be distinguished from include: imagination, physical intuition, belief, sense perception, judgment, guess, hunch, and common sense. The examples that Bealer takes to be instances of intuitions include cases where we can 'just see' that Gettier cases pose a problem for the traditional doctrine that knowledge can be defined as justified true belief, and cases where we can 'just see' the validity of certain logical inferences, e.g. de Morgan's laws. He tells us that in such cases, 'You suddenly ''just see'' it. It presents itself as how things must be. Of course, this kind of seeming is *intellectual*, not sensory or introspective' (Bealer [1993], 165). Because Bealer takes it to be the case that intuitions are often appealed to in our standard method of justification, he extends our use of the term 'evidence' to include intuitions along side experiences, observations, memory, and testimony, all of which are claimed already to have the status of *prima facie* evidence.

Bealer attempts to justify extending the scope of *prima facie* evidence to include intuitions after addressing the issue of whether or not intuitions should be categorized as *reasons*. He emphasizes that if intuitions are used as reasons for justifying various conclusions, e.g. using intuitions as reasons for accepting that a certain statement is logically true if it follows intuitively from certain statements that are

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6 A useful discussion of the nature and function of seemings is found in Tolhurst (1998).

themselves logically true, then we say that these intuitions are *evident*. Bealer's *prima facie* evidence is intended to include reasons that are *prima facie* evident in the same way that reasons are used to justify logical inferences. Bealer claims that, 'It shall be clear that this terminological extension does not bias our discussion. Readers who object to this practice should hereafter read ''*prima facie* evidence'' as ''reasons that are *prima facie* evident''' (Bealer [1993], 164).

There is one final point that needs to be made regarding the role that intuitions play in the standard justificatory procedure and the phenomenological place of intuitions within our cognitive framework. Concerning justification, Bealer stresses the significance of intuitions in relation to a certain kind of criticism that is applied on epistemic grounds, specifically self-criticism. Self-criticism is used in the assessment of any of the components that make up our justificatory procedure. He asserts that,

> Specifically, this mechanism permits one to challenge the legitimacy of any standing source of *prima facie* evidence (experience, observation, intuition, memory, testimony). The presence of this mechanism in the standard justificatory procedure keeps the procedure from being either obviously empiricist or obviously non-empiricist. It all depends on which sources of *prima facie* evidence survive the process of criticism. (Bealer [1993], 165)

This passage brings up a curious feature of the standard justificatory procedure as it is understood by Bealer. Evidently Bealer's use of self-criticism in the standard justificatory procedure involves assigning significant weight to a kind of meta-justification that is required by that procedure. What is of interest for us at this point is the role that intuition plays in the mechanism of self-criticism. As Bealer points out later, intuition is itself actually a component of the mechanism of self-criticism. Although Bealer's notion that intuitions must be used in order to criticize intuition itself requires further elaboration, we may forego an assessment of this idea at the present time and instead consider the exact nature of justification that Bealer appears to be endorsing. We would like to point out that Bealer appears to be advocating a kind of foundationalist view of justification. A crude examination of foundationalism will be necessary at this point so that we may sort out roughly what view of justification Bealer endorses and why it is foundationalist in character.

III   Bealer's (Tacit) Foundationalism

We face an obstacle in assessing Bealer's arguments against empiricism that concerns how exactly his foundationalism is to be formulated. This difficulty arises due to the fact that he does make a distinction between

intuitions, which are intellectual seemings to be true, and beliefs, which lack the characteristic of a seeming to be true. Bealer's position on this point is a little awkward because we take it that individuals hold their beliefs to be true. If we do not take our beliefs to be true, then it does not seem quite right for us to say that we still hold that belief. For the most part, people's beliefs involve the element that the agent holding the belief will assent to the truth of the belief. Bealer's distinction is based on the robustness of intellectual seemings, which apparently have value over and above just strictly taking something to be true. He gives the example of the way that we believe in the truth of many mathematical theorems for which we have seen the proofs. He believes in the truth of the theorems although he does not have any intuition regarding the theorems; the theorems do not *seem* to be either true or false. We would still consider such states to be beliefs, but this can be overlooked for the purposes of our defense of Quinean empiricism.

So, even if Bealer is not altogether precise about the exact nature of intuitions, and although he distinguishes them from beliefs, the function that intuitions seem to have in terms of grounding aspects of our justificatory procedure is closely akin to the 'basic beliefs' and 'direct evidence' that are appealed to by other garden variety foundationalists. Although Bealer does not directly claim to be a foundationalist, he does give us rather persuasive hints that he actually accepts such a view, even if only tacitly. Because we only require a rough sketch of foundationalism in order to make the claim that Bealer subscribes to such a stance, we need only look at a rather basic and familiar presentation of foundationalism.

It seems safe to say that Roderick Chisholm's (1966) view is a paradigm case of foundationalist empiricism. Chisholm appeals to 'the directly evident' as the means by which our empirical knowledge is grounded. The analysis that Chisholm gives of the directly evident is as follows: 'What justifies me in counting it as evident that *a* is F is simply the fact that *a* is F' (Chisholm [1966], 28). It is that which is directly evident that allows for any form of empirical knowledge. Our confidence in any non-basic, or non-directly evident, belief derives from knowledge of what is directly evident. Chisholm further elaborates on what kinds of things may be said to be directly evident. He states that,

> Other states that may be similarly self-presenting are those described by ''thinking that one remembers that ...'' or ''seeming to remember that ...'' (as distinguished from ''remembering that ...''), and ''taking'' or ''thinking that one perceives'' (as distinguished from ''perceiving''). (Chisholm [1966], 29)

There is a striking similarity between Bealer's explanation of intuitions and Chisholm's analysis of the directly evident. If one were to object to this claim then one need only direct one's attention to Chisholm's

examples of what is directly evident to see the deep similarity between Chisholm's and Bealer's views. Chisholm notes that,

> ... the directly evident premises that are available to us at any given moment, could be expressed in statements of the following sort.
>> I take something to be a cat on the roof.
>> I seem to recall that it was here before.
>> I am thinking about a horse.
>> I am trying to get across the street.
>> I am appeared greenly to. (Chisholm [1966], 38-9)

A prominent feature in all of these examples is the presence of a certain type of relationship between an epistemic agent and a doxastic appearance or seeming. So, actual empirical knowledge of the world is mediated by an immediate state that the agent holds in his own epistemic standpoint. Instead of a belief that something is the case, however, the states that ground knowledge for an epistemic agent are internal states that something seems to, or appears to, be the case. Bealer's claims about intuitions are remarkably similar to Chisholm's claims about the directly evident, although for Bealer intuitions are neither *sensory* seemings, nor beliefs proper.

More crucially, on Bealer's view intuitions have an importance over and above that of typical beliefs or sensory seemings because of the unique role that they play in providing an underpinning for certain aspects of an individual's cognitive superstructure. His intuitions are advanced as having a kind of intrinsic justification and independence that is comparable to that of typical 'basic beliefs' as understood by contemporary epistemologists. One might claim that the method of self-criticism that Bealer develops as a check for fallibility denies intuitions this kind of enhanced status, but Bealer commits himself precisely to this kind of epistemic function for intuitions in his criticism of empiricism.

Nevertheless, we suspect that Bealer would object to our foundationalist construal of his epistemology. Indeed, in a later article, Bealer (2000), he actually formulates and endorses a reliabilist theory of empirical knowledge, and, given close inspection, it is apparent that Bealer employs such reliabilist notions in his argument against Quine. However, in both articles, Bealer asserts that the use of intuitions in the standard justificatory procedure is necessary to make sense of actual (normative) epistemic practice, thus resulting in the rejection of Quinean empiricism. We believe that Bealer's view is best understood as a form of reliabilism, but it is a hybrid view that draws on both reliabilist and foundationalist notions. In particular, we believe that Bealer's explicit claims about the nature and function of intuitions, specifically the privileged justificatory status given to intuitions, justify our characterization of his view as, in

part, foundationalist. So, even if Bealer is, strictly speaking, a reliabilist, the foundationalist *features* of his view qua intuitions are obvious and they will be sufficient to warrant our claims on behalf of Quineans in the sequel. As such, our overall Quinean defense against the SPA can still be mounted, even if Bealer's view is not a typical form of foundationalism.

IV   The Starting Points Argument

Bealer's starting points argument originates from two of his core claims. The first is that intuitions are used in formulating beliefs, and the second is that intuitions play a significant role in following certain cognitive rules and procedures like inference. The crux of the argument is that we rely on intuitions whenever we follow these kinds of rules and inferences. After Bealer makes this point, the rest of the argument follows easily. Since, theoretically, empiricists do not allow for the use of intuitions in justificatory practices, Bealer claims that empiricists contradict their *own* actual practices. He says that, 'Indeed, there is a special irony here, for in their actual practice empiricists typically make use of a wide range of intuitions. For example, what does and does not count as an observation or experience?' (Bealer [1993], 168) Bealer states that this same problem arises for empiricists concerning what count as theories, justifications, explanations, laws of nature, deductively valid arguments, logical truths, and theoretical virtues. Again, it cannot be overemphasized that Bealer's main point here is that intuitions are actually used by everyone in real epistemic practice.

   Bealer takes it to be the case that the empiricists' strongest reply to the SPA would be to claim that although intuitions are actually used in formulating their theories, intuitions are not used as *prima facie* evidence in the task of justification. Intuitions would be used to develop a theory, but in actual justificatory practice, intuitions fall out of the picture. Bealer contends that this kind of response is unsatisfactory if empiricists are committed to granting to him the truth of the claim that intuitions are actually used as epistemic *starting points*. Bealer's argument begins with the assertion that, either intuitions about starting points are reliable or intuitions about starting points are not reliable. If our intuitions regarding starting points are not reliable and are prone to error, then the resulting comprehensive theory will be deemed unreliable. Bealer considers whether or not a 'bootstrapping' method could salvage empiricism at this point, but quickly dismisses the possible benefits of this move due to the depth of the problem. If our intuitions are unreliable regarding what exactly should be taken as evidence or observation, then there does not seem to be a possibility that a method of spotting and eliminating errors would ever come to be reliable. The difficulty seems too epistemi-

cally fundamental. Bealer contends that an individual's pretheoretic judgments regarding what is included as evidence must be reliable in order for a bootstrapping method reliably to get off of the ground. If, however, intuitions regarding starting points come out as reliable, then Bealer holds that whatever it is that makes these intuitions reliable will make our intuitions regarding what is to count as *prima facie* evidence reliable. In this case we would have reliable intuitions concerning further intuitions and our intuitions would count as *prima facie* evidence. Bealer maintains that in either case of the empiricist dilemma, empiricism comes out as blatantly inconsistent and wrong. Either empiricism denies fundamental aspects of our justificatory procedure or empiricism has no way of dealing with errors that are part and parcel of our pretheoretic judgments.

Bealer considers a final empiricist response to the SPA that takes empiricists to deny that pretheoretic starting-points are developed by the use of intuitions. In this case there would be some other mechanism that would determine an individual's judgment regarding epistemic starting points. However, Bealer states that this move would not be true to 'the psychological facts.' These 'psychological facts' that Bealer speaks of are determined by the phenomenological considerations that Bealer develops regarding the cognitive status of intuitions and the distinction between intuitions and the other psychological terms that Bealer glosses over. Because empiricism leads us to either accepting an unreliable global theory or to denying the evidential status of intuitions, the choice to accept empiricism is claimed to be unwarranted and self-defeating.[7]

In Bealer's second argument from his 1993, the argument from epistemic norms, he further elaborates on the notion of what is to count as *prima facie* evidence. When he addresses the problem of fallible intuitions, Bealer invokes the use of re-description and of complete specification as a means for resolving apparent conflicts. These apparent conflicts would arise in situations where and individual's initial intuitions seemingly turn out to be false. However, Bealer notes that quite often we find that what at one time may seem to be an initial intuition is made more precise by re-describing the intuition or giving a more complete specification of the intuition. Re-describing or offering a more complete specification an intuition is then supposed by Bealer to be analogous to re-describing or more completely specifying an observation.

Concerning the standard techniques, re-description and complete specification, it would seem as though Bealer is committed to the posi-

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7 Ironically, Casullo (2000) argues that the same sort of criticism can be leveled at rationalism.

tion that the use of these methods is determined fundamentally by the use of intuition. What other mechanism at Bealer's disposal would be capable of determining the method for resolving these kinds of conflicts? It might be the case that Bealer could appeal to some other mechanism, but absent any other suggestion he seems to be committed to the use of intuitions as the method for resolving this sort of problem. If this is true, then the claim that Bealer's method of self-criticism tacitly relies on intuitions is bolstered. Actually, Bealer gives further support for this claim later in the same discussion when he considers how in fact we come to assess whether or not a candidate for *prima facie* evidence should be admitted. Due to the significance of the passage, we quote Bealer at length.

> The standard justificatory procedure permits us to apply the present method against a currently accepted source of *prima facie* evidence if and only if *intuitively* that source is not as basic as the sources of *prima facie* evidence being used to challenge it. That is, according to the standard procedure, we are to consult our intuitions regarding the relative basicness of a given source of *prima facie* evidence. If and only if intuition declares that source not to be as basic as the sources that are being used to challenge it are we to proceed. (Bealer [1993], 177)

As we can see from this passage, the mechanism for self-criticism seems to rely on intuition, and there does not seem to be a procedure that Bealer could appeal to that would allow for an assessment of intuition without itself employing intuitions. Although this may seem circular, the point need not be addressed in order to establish our defense of Quinean empiricism against the SPA. However, it does drive home our point that he attributes special epistemological status to intuitions in a foundational manner.

   Given our characterization of Bealer's view of intuitions and the role that they play in his arguments, we must conclude that Bealer is endorsing a foundationalist version of justification, or something very similar to it. This feature of Bealer's epistemology stands in stark contrast to Quine's empiricism and appears to contradict Quine's overall epistemology. However, we should now be rather suspicious of the SPA and we should be careful to note that if Bealer's arguments, which are directed at the internal coherence of Quine's empiricism, are to be taken as cogent, then they must satisfy *Quine's* and not Bealer's epistemic views. Specifically, the most important of these assumptions concern just what form of epistemic appraisal Quine is committed to. If Bealer's arguments apply to a version of empiricism that Quine is not actually committed to, then Bealer would seem to be doing no more than making a strawman of Quine's views. In order to reach any kind of conclusion on this matter, however, we will first have to turn our attention to Quine's own views, as he presents them.

V   Quine, Meaning, and Justification

A rather tricky issue arises for Quine that concerns his view of the status of 'belief' and other related epistemic terms. Although Quine does quite often speak of 'beliefs,' we should not interpret him as attributing any kind of robust ontological reality to these things.[8] For Quine, beliefs proper do not exist. At least as far as language and logic go, Quine is a behaviorist. Although this topic, in and of itself, deserves a careful and probably lengthy discussion, we need here only point out that his use of 'belief' is not that of a term denoting a kind of mental event. 'Beliefs' are to be replaced with stimulus-response pairs that set assent/dissent conditions for sentences. As such, Quine's views on epistemological matters can be dealt with in a fairly productive manner if we focus our attention on sentences rather than on beliefs. Observing which sentences an individual is disposed to assent to or to dissent to, then replaces talk about the beliefs of an individual. But what role might intuition, or intellectual seeming, play in such a view?

The key concept employed by behaviorists such as Quine is, of course, that of conditioning. As he explains,

> Many expressions, including most of our earliest, are learned *ostensively*; they are learned in the situation that they describe, or in the presence of the things that they describe. They are conditioned, in short, to observations; and to publicly shared observations, since both teacher and learner have to see the appropriateness of the occasion. (Quine [1986], 6)

At this point, Bealer might contend that Quine's use of the expression 'to see the appropriateness of the occasion' involves intuitions. However, Quine seems only to mean that learning this expression is itself a matter of conditioning. There is no 'appropriateness' that exists apart from environmental conditioning and shared physiology. Utterances of a certain type are made in certain circumstances. As long as utterances that are similar enough to each other are used given the circumstance type in question, conversation continues. If an utterance is too dissimilar from those that are used in a certain context, then the speaker will likely be met with puzzling looks and the conversation comes to a halt.

In this way we can see that language is a resource of a community and that meanings are not things that a single individual may come to possess, because meanings themselves are to be eliminated along with beliefs as per Quine's classic 1960 work. Once it is made clear that Quine

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8 See, for example, Quine (1985) and Quine (1995), ch. 1.

takes language to be a strictly public tool and that language arises in light of our attempts to communicate and predict observation sentences, we can see that these two notions dovetail nicely. Quine tells us that,

> I agree that the practical notion of observation is thus relative to one or another limited community, rather than to the whole speech community. An observation sentence for a community is an occasion sentence on which members of the community can agree outright on witnessing the occasion. (Quine [1992], 6)

From this passage we can see that, for Quine, observation sentences, which are required for language, are tied to other individual's utterances in certain similar circumstances. Quine is dedicated to the idea that meanings, if anything, are nothing more than a matter of behaving in a certain way given a range of stimulations.

Because Quine dismisses meanings altogether, especially meanings construed as entities that can be discussed apart from an environment that includes stimulus and behavior, the key for successful communication falls on the shoulders of translation. Again, Quine endorses deflationary tactics for 'translation' and given his well-known view of radical translation, we find that communication itself is a matter of prediction just as science is a matter of prediction. Quine's basic position is that our main epistemic task is to make predictions about observations, or, more precisely, to make predictions about sensory stimulations. However, as long as two sets of beliefs can be used to predict the same set of sensory stimulations, there is no empirical way to adjudicate between them. For Quine this is all that would matter, and so does Quine allow for different ontologies to be related to identical sensory stimulations but that such differences are merely nominal. More importantly for our task here, Quine holds that the truth of an individual belief cannot be determined in isolation. He asserts that, 'The beliefs face the tribunal of observation not singly but in a body' (Quine [1970], 13), and in so doing commits himself both to a holistic semantics and *epistemology*. Observation is used to epistemically judge sets of beliefs, and while it is clear that Quine takes justification to be a matter of how a body of beliefs fares with respect to observations *he does not do so in a foundationalist manner*.

Through reflection on aspects of Quine's take on language and learning, we can see quite clearly that his method of approaching epistemology is quite unorthodox when compared to some more traditional projects. Epistemologists who endorse more metaphysically robust accounts of the nature of beliefs typically object to Quine's behaviorism based solely on the fact that Quine's approach comes off as counterintuitive. For Quine though, this does not pose a problem because his frame of reference is quite different than those who wish to ontologically commit themselves to what Quine sees as terms that have been unwisely

reified. At this juncture, we can see where Quine's naturalism comes into play, and his commitment to naturalism goes a long way to explaining his rejection of foundationalism.

To be sure, Quine's naturalism seems to be an obvious extension of his semantic and epistemological holism, and in committing himself to naturalized epistemology Quine affords himself the luxury of appealing to the natural sciences in order to derive the justification that we desire our 'belief' systems to exhibit. Whereas traditional epistemology may have been searching for a science-transcendent foundation from which science could itself be justified, a foundation deeper than science itself, Quine dismisses this notion as both asking for both something that has proved to be conceptually problematic and that is simply not there. Of naturalized epistemology he claims,

> The motivation is still philosophical, as motivation in natural science tends to be, and the inquiry proceeds in disregard of disciplinary boundaries but with respect for the disciplines themselves and appetite for their input. Unlike the old epistemologists, we seek no firmer basis for science than science itself; so we are free to use the very fruits of science in investigating its roots. It is a matter, as always in science, of tackling one problem with the help of our answers to others. (Quine [1995], 16)

Although traditional epistemologists and Bealer might like to claim that Quine is dangerously close to circularity or incoherence we believe that this claim that is easily repudiated. We will subsequently argue that Quine's concept of justification should be understood to be wholly a matter of the coherence of 'beliefs,' where beliefs are suitably interpreted as S-R pairs. Quine does not (and should not) accept the circularity objection because he does not accept the traditional foundationalist take on empiricism that Bealer attributes to him.

VI Quine's Coherentism[9]

The next step in our defense will be to look at some of the major characteristics of coherence theories of justification in order to validate the claim that Quine's view should legitimately be categorized as coherentist in nature. However, Quine's coherentism differs in some respects from other typical coherence theories. Specifically, most other coherentists are, borrowing Conee and Feldman's (2001) analysis, internalists, accessibilists and mentalists. Briefly, internalism is the view that one's

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9 We should be clear that although we are interested in disambiguating Quine's actual views, we are more concerned in this section with making the case that Quinean-inspired epistemologies that incorporate Bealer's i-iii are versions of coherentism.

justificatory status is a function of states internal to the epistemic agent. Accessibilism is the view that epistemic agents have some sort of privileged access to those states that justify the agent's beliefs, and mentalism is the view that justifiers are mental items. It is not at all clear that Quine accepts any of these positions. However, we do find enough of a similarity on relevant points between Quine and other coherentists that we may, for our purposes, classify Quine as a coherentist.[10] We can usefully turn to BonJour and Lehrer, the two most well-known coherentists, to elaborate on this view.

BonJour's coherentist view is fairly unique and although he later relinquished the view in his 1998, he does provide a rather unobjectionable characterization of coherentism. BonJour's account of coherence involves the following principles:

(1) A system of beliefs is coherent only if it is logically consistent.

(2) A system of beliefs is coherent in proportion to its degree of probabilistic consistency.

(3) The coherence of a system of beliefs is increased by the presence of inferential connections between its component beliefs and increased in proportion to the number and strength of such connections.

(4) The coherence of a system of beliefs is diminished to the extent to which it is divided into subsystems of beliefs which are relatively unconnected to each other by inferential connections.

(5) The coherence of a system of beliefs is decreased in proportion to the presence of unexplained anomalies in the believed content of the system. (Bon Jour [1985], 95-9)

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10 Our opinion is in accord with Goldman's characterization of Quine (see Goldman [1986], sec. 9.4 and Goldman [1999], 28). Haack (1990) argues that Quine's view incorporates aspect of both coherentism *and* foundationalism, and Quine agrees to a degree (see Quine [1990], 192). However, Quine's view is clearly foundational only in the sense that he is not a *nativist*, and he adopts the view that our web of belief owes its origin to experience (see Quine [1995], ch. 4). He is, however, clearly a coherentist in the sense that conservatism, entrenchment, simplicity, predictive success, etc. are holistic explanatory virtues that govern the selection of belief systems and this is supported by his claims in Quine [1990], 128, and especially Quine [1960] sections 5 and 6. Interestingly enough, although Haack defends a hybrid, 'foundheretist,' view in her 1993, Thagard (2000, chapter 3) sees (we believe correctly) that this view is really just a coherentist version of empiricism that takes coherence to be explanatory.

We should note that, given BonJour's account of coherence, justification depends on the connections of beliefs to other beliefs, with no single type of belief standing alone as more basically justified than any other belief. The system of beliefs as a whole is what is justified rather than single beliefs on their own. This feature of BonJour's coherence theory is quite similar to Quine's own views of justification, with the obvious exception of BonJour's apparent commitment to the ontological status of beliefs.[11] In any case, for coherentists we must focus not on small sets of sentences or beliefs and their foundations in order to assess the epistemic merits of an individual's doxastic state, but rather on the total block of sentences or beliefs of an individual.

Similarly, when we turn our attention to some of Lehrer's comments on coherence theories, it is apparent that attributing a coherence theory to Quine is even more appropriate. Lehrer mentions that he opposes the approach of both Quine and Sellars concerning the topic of justification, the approach that consists in focusing on conditioned response, but he does acknowledge their adherence to a form of coherence theory, specifically something similar to a theory of justification based on explanatory coherence.[12] It is not then surprising that the characterization of coherence theories that Lehrer formulates strongly resembles the salient features of Bealer's construal of Quine's principles of holism and naturalism. Lehrer states that in coherence theories of justification:

> S is completely justified in believing that p if and only if the belief of S that p is consistent with that system C of beliefs having a maximum of explanatory coherence among those systems of beliefs understood by S, and the belief that p either explains something relative to C which is not explained better by anything with which contradicts p or the belief that p is explained by something relative to C and nothing which contradicts it is explained better relative to C. (Lehrer [1974], 165)

Were Bealer to respond that a system of beliefs that includes the use of intuitions, such as that which he sketches in the close of his 1993 article,

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11 This claim about Quine's views on justification might seem strange in light of his naturalism which, at times, appears to commit him to giving up on normative epistemology. However, while Quine has said such things (see section 7.0), we believe that these claims are mostly polemical or elliptically intended to be directed against foundationalist normativity. Quine's view is, in our view, normative in the sense that he says that our beliefs *should* cohere with experiences, *should* have high predictive value, *should* be conservative, etc. Our interpretation of Quine in this respect concurs with those of Cherniak (1986), Foley (1994), and Gibson (1988; especially ch. 3).

12 In point of fact, Quine's view is most close to the explanationism defended in Lycan (1988) and Thagard (2000), which we take to be forms of coherentism.

would be more explanatory than a system of beliefs, such as Quine's, which rejects the use of intuitions, then he faces some difficulties. This proposal itself depends upon our understanding of the nature and function of intuitions. For Quine, however, there is nothing to the term to understand because intuitions are irrelevant to the way in which we empirically maneuver in our environment. Quine, at least implicitly, rejects completely the idea that intuitions play any substantial epistemic role because they have no such role in our scientific theories. For this reason, the claim that intuitions would add to the explanatory power of our best epistemological theories seems contentious at best, if not just false. As Quineans see it, such terms should be completely dropped from scientific discourse, at least insofar as they do not make any contribution to the overall coherence of our belief systems. Moreover, as we shall see in section VII, Quine himself has explained away our appeals to intuition, and so there is no reason to suspect that our appeals to intuition cannot be explained within the context of Quinean empiricism.

In any case, Lehrer supplies even more strongly supportive remarks concerning Quine's adherence to a coherence theory. Lehrer speaks of Quine and Sellars' theories of meaning and their relation to conditioned response, and says that,

> Nevertheless, both authors consider such patterns to constitute the link between language and sensory experience. Hence, whether we are completely justified in believing some observation statement to be true depends on how that statement is linked to sensory experience by such patterns. These patterns accordingly constitute some restraint on the way in which we may eliminate observation statements from the system to save ourselves explanatory labour. (Lehrer [1974], 172)

So, we conclude that Quine is best classified as a coherentist with respect to epistemic justification, even if his views are somewhat different from the garden variety coherentists like Lehrer and BonJour. There is enough overt similarity between Quine's views on the web of belief and its holistic epistemic features to support this contention without it being necessary to show in any great technical detail that Quine's views conform to BonJour's or Lehrer's specific characterizations of coherentism.[13] More importantly, for our purpose here of responding to Bealer's SPA we need only to make the case that Quine's epistemological views

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13 A reviewer has suggested that Quine's view is better regarded as a form of contextualism, and that this would also permit Quineans to respond to the SPA in a similar manner to the one we suggest here. While this is interesting we are inclined to maintain our claim that Quine is best viewed as a coherentist.

are coherentist in spirit, and we believe that we have done so in the preceding sections.

Having made both the case that Quine is an epistemological coheren-tist and that Bealer is an epistemological foundationalist, it then becomes clear why Bealer's SPA is question-begging. The grounds on which Bealer attacks Quine's empiricism in the SPA presuppose a *foundation-alist* view of justification whereby our epistemological practices must start with foundational appeals to basic intuitions. As such, Bealer's argument does not seem to be relevant to Quine's position because the argument is not directed at the *coherentist justification* of Quine's funda-mental views; i.e. at the coherence of i-iii. If Quine held a foundationalist position, which, as we have demonstrated, he clearly does not, then Bealer's point might well be cogent. However, as Quine's position stands this is not the case, and Bealer's SPA does little more than beg the question of foundationalism against Quinean empiricism.

VII   What About Our Use of Intuitions?

In spite of the charge of begging the question of foundationalism, Bealer nevertheless appears to contend that Quineans cannot counter the claim that we all use intuitions in epistemic practice. Indeed, in one respect Bealer is quite correct. 'Intuition' is a term that is used in our discourse. What might Quine say about this fact? As we see it Quine needs only to explain the ubiquity and use of the term within the context of his views. In point of fact, Quine actually considers the approach that Bealer seems to favor, and even comments on the use of intuitions in epistemological contexts. He states that, 'Sometimes, though we are quite convinced that a belief is right, we can think of no reasons at all for holding it. It is in such cases that we are apt to give credit to intuition' (Quine [1970], 60). So, Quine does not think that the use of this term poses any kind of difficulty for his epistemic views. The term fits in with the rest of the way that language is developed; that is according to behaviorism. Quine mentions that behaviors do give us clues concerning how intuitions are supposedly used for grounding our knowledge. It just happens to be the case that we use a form of unconscious analogy that does the work that intuitions are supposed to do. Quine offers further illuminating com-ments on the nature of intuition:

> Where an intuition has anything at all to be said for it, it has something making no mention of intuition to be said for it: sensory clues that may not have registered as such, long forgotten beliefs, analogies more or less vague. Uncovering the basis of such a belief helps us to appraise the belief; yet to demand that the basis of every reasonable belief be thus uncovered would be to demand the impossible. (Quine [1970], 60)

So, 'intuition' is a term used to fill in explanatory gaps; for example, intuition is appealed to where we can no longer recall the origin of a belief. The impossibility that Quine speaks of is not an *a priori* impossibility, but rather the physical impossibility of enumerating the entirety of our system of beliefs and their origins due to our finitude. There are well-understood empirical and computational reasons why we can neither point out the behavioral genesis of every one of our beliefs nor enumerate every belief we have.[14] In any case, intuitions are not something that are real *per se* for Quine, and more importantly for our purposes, Quine *does*, *pace* Bealer, offer an explanation for the term that is fully coherent with his fundamental views. Because Quine can account for the nature and role of intuitions and because Bealer begs the question of foundationalism against Quine, the SPA is much less damaging for Quinean empiricism either than it was originally intended to be or than it has subsequently been taken to be.

VIII   Conclusion

The necessity of appealing to intuitions that Bealer asserts is a necessity only for those who, like Bealer, presuppose a foundationalist epistemology. For Quine, the addition of intuitions to our justificatory resources is superfluous as it does no epistemic work. We need not appeal to intuition as a source of justification because science is just, more or less, what we do. Science does not employ intuition as justificatory in the appropriate coherentist sense, and we can account for our use of the term 'intuition' without falling prey to the charge of self-defeating incoherence. Science is like a kind of game that has its own parameters. What is the justification for the parameters? For Quine, this question does not make sense. The justification is only to be found within the game itself. He says that, 'But when I cite predictions as the checkpoints of science, I do not see that as normative. I see it as defining a particular language game, in Wittgenstein's phrase: the game of science, in contrast to other good language games such as fiction and poetry' (Quine [1992], 120).[15] Quine goes so far as to give up on epistemology as a field unto itself.[16]

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14   See Cherniak (1992), Harman (1986), Shaffer (2002) and Thagard (2000) for discussion.

15   Our interpretation of this passage (as we noted in n.10) takes Quine reference to normativity to elliptically mean foundationally normative.

16   However, as noted earlier, we do not believe that this entails giving up on normativity altogether.

Psychology is a more appropriate tool for resolving the issues that have traditionally arisen in epistemology. The move of placing epistemology on a par with the natural sciences is a move toward giving up on foundationalist views. Quine explicitly says that, 'One effect of seeing epistemology in a psychological setting is that it resolves a stubborn old enigma of epistemological priority' (Quine [1994], 26). The idea of having to give further epistemic justification for our scientific enterprises is, at least for Quine, ridiculous. Scientific practice is to be judged by the coherence of scientific practice alone, i.e. without appeal to *any* epistemologically privileged foundations. So, while Bealer does offer a novel attempt to refute Quine's empiricism with the SPA, his criticism that Quinean empiricism is unwarranted and it is simply question-begging.
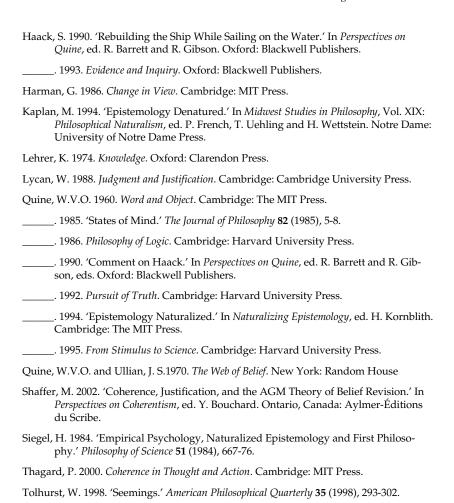
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