

TWO ANTI-SCEPTICAL PROJECTS. We consider a radical sceptic who claims that our perceptions don't offer *any* knowledge or justification for believing any proposition about our 'surroundings'. We further distinguish: 517

(14-1) **Ambitious anti-scepticism:** Refuting the sceptic on his own terms and establishing that we can know *P* using only the sceptic-certified premises.

Modest anti-scepticism: Establishing that we can know *P* without contradicting obvious facts about perception. We defuse sceptical arguments and retain pre-theoretical beliefs without accepting the premises the sceptic suggests.

MOORE'S INPUT. Pryor reads Moore as contributing two ideas to the debate: 518

(14-2) **Moore-1:** The proposition that there is a hand is more certain than any of the premises used in a sceptical argument refuting it. Moore claims that it's more reasonable to reject the sceptic's premisses than to accept his conclusion.

Moore-2: Moore can know some propositions without being able to prove them. For example, he knows, 'Here is one hand.' He can't offer non-question-begging reasons in its favour, yet he still knows them.

Pryor will defend 'dogmatism' based on Moore-2.

EXPERIENCE DOGMATISM. Your perceptual experiences are states with propositional content: they represent the world to you as being a certain way. This content is delivered to you simply by virtue of your having the experience. There's no need for any further beliefs about the external objects/states of affairs. Hence: 518

(14-3) **Justification dogmatism:** When it perceptually seems to you that *P* (=you have *P*-experience), you acquire an 'immediate' justification for believing *P*.

Knowledge dogmatism: When it perceptually seems to you that *P* (=you have *P*-experience), you know *P*. 519
[but Pryor puts this version aside] 521

It is misleading to call *P*-experience your 'evidence' for believing *P*, since this connotes some inferential steps to be covered to arrive at *P*. No, having *P*-experience by itself justifies *P*-belief. This kind of justification doesn't require any further non-circular argument for *P*-belief.

Hence the contrast with fallibilism: for a fallibilist, you must be in a position to give a non-circular, though defeasible, justification for *P*.

It is clear that Pryor's dogmatism has a narrower scope than Moore's argument(s). We only insist on acquiring knowledge in a perceptual situation, w/o saying anything at all about other commonsensical beliefs like 'There are many human bodies on Earth', 'I wasn't born yesterday' etc. See (14-12) below.

THE SCEPTICAL ARGUMENT. The standard sceptical argument has the premiss: 521

1 You are not in a position to know you're not being deceived by an evil demon right now.

But we may refuse to allow to use **1** as a *premiss*. It might, therefore, be better to use this:

5 Either you don't know you are not being deceived by an evil demon; or, if you do know you're not being deceived, it's because that knowledge rests in part on things you know by perception. 523

But as we saw, Plantinga, for example, disputes **5**. We have a good non-empirical reason for believing in God, and God wouldn't endow us with uniformly misleading senses. Putnam too, I think, is hostile to (5): the reasons he gives against the BIV scenario are manifestly *not* based on perception. 523

Either way, the sceptic needs a reason to require us to know that we are *not* deceived before we make any perception-based knowledge claim. 'Before' means: the reason should not be circular (=question-begging, guilty of a *petitio principii* fallacy). 524

 **BADNESS.** Sceptical scenarios are supposed to be **BAD**. The most interesting sense of **BADNESS** is that they ‘undermine’, though not refute, your epistemic stance toward P . Suppose that you learn that you are dreaming having hands: P = ‘I have hands.’ Well, in reality you may still have hands (P is true), and being told that you were dreaming does not tell you that $\sim P$. However, you no longer *trust* your evidence.

Question 1. Give other examples that contrast the **BADNESS** of the given P with its ability to refute.

In other word, **BADNESS** vitiates your evidence, hence you must rule it out in order to claim to know anything on the basis of **BAD** evidence. Hence:

(14-4) **Sceptical Principle about Knowledge (SPK):** If you can know P on the basis of E , then for every q which is **BAD** relative to E and p , you have to *antecedently know* q to be false on the basis of E . 528

Since we assume that the sceptical scenario is **BAD**, we get:

(14-5)  **7** To know anything abt the external world you must antecedently know that you are not BIVing (=not deceived by an evil demon etc.).

But of course, you can’t know by perception that you are not BIVing, since every perception may well be vitiated (undermined) by a BIV-scenario.

More rigorously, as Pryor shows, suppose for *reductio* that you do know that you are not BIVing. Now  **5** entails that you know this by having some antecedent piece of perceptual knowledge P_* . However,  **7** entails that you must know P_* in some P_* -independent way, which is precisely you can’t do. Hence a contradiction. Hence ultimately:

(14-6)  **9** You can’t know anything about the external world on the basis of your perceptual experiences.

There is an analogous argument in terms of justification. We begin with with an analogue of  **5**:

(14-7)  **14** If you are justified in believing that you’re not being deceived by an evil demon, that justification has to rest in part on some perceptual justification you have for believing things about the external world. 530

Then we get:

(14-8) **SPJ:** If you are justified in believing P on the basis of E , then for every q which is **BAD** relative to E and P , you have to have *antecedent justification* for believing q to be false. 531

Question 2. Spell out in full the version of the sceptical argument that uses SPJ.

DIMENSIONS OF IMMEDIATE JUSTIFICATION. Pryor now sets out to offer a ‘dogmatist’ response to the SPJ-based sceptical argument. We have already seen in (14-3) that it rests on the idea of immediate justification. We now explain what it is in more detail (IJP = Immediate justification for P):

(14-9) **Immediacy:** IJP is not based on any evidence/reasons for believing some $q \neq P$. Still, the belief that P may be fallible. 532

Psychological neutrality: IJP is not the same as psychological spontaneity. It is, in short, an epistemic phenomenon, not a psychological one. 533

≠ **Self-evidence:** P is self-evident if understanding it is itself a (good) reason for believing it. Self-evidence entails IJP, but not the other way around. Pryor says that the reverse entailment, if it holds, ‘needs arguing’. But I think that there is no such entailment. 533

≠ **Self-justification:** IJP doesn’t entail that merely believing that P justifies that belief. That may be the case for P = ‘I have a belief’, but not generally. 533

≠ **Epistemic autonomy:** We should keep apart discovery and justification. I may need certain beliefs to be able to form the belief that P . This doesn’t mean that these beliefs justify my belief that P . 533



Prima facie justification: IJP may be defeated/undermined by further evidence. But unless such evidence is provided, I am justified in believing P . The sceptic balks at this. The SPJ-argument is supposed to entail that I don’t have any justification before I have ruled out the sceptical scenario. 534

- # Having further justifications: IJP does not entail that, when having IJP, I also, by that very fact, have a justification for a second-order belief that IJP. 535
- # Having an argument for *P*: Similarly, IJP doesn't entail an ability to spell out why *P* is justified. IJP is something much more primitive than that. 535

JUSTIFYING DOGMATISM. Why believe dogmatism? Well, I think that, at a fundamental level, Pryor doesn't go much further than Moore on *this* question. We are banging on the table and announce:

(14-10) 'Let's take these intuitive appearances at face value. [...] Our experiences do intuitively seem to justify us in believing a great many things about the external world.' 536

But there's a useful paraphrase:

(14-11) 'Your experiences give you *prima facie* justification for your perceptual beliefs.' 537

That is, experiences deliver this justification *even* in the face of the sceptical scenario. This is the crux of Pryor's dogmatism.

JUDGEMENTS OF PERCEPTION RECONSIDERED. What *are* the propositions that can be justified immediately, and towards which we should be dogmatic (=JPs)? Here are some propositions that are not JPs:

(14-12) Propositions that are not immediately justified.

- a. 'This car is a Honda.' [whilst looking at a car in front of me] 536
- b. 'I am out of gas.' [whilst looking at the gas gauge] 538
- c. 'There is a policeman there.' [whilst looking at a blue-coated policeman] 538
- d. 'He has passed the exam.' [whilst looking at a smiling man leaving the exam room] 539

And here are the putative JPs:

(14-13) Propositions that are immediately justified.

- a. 'This is a car.' [whilst looking at a car in front of me] 539
- b. 'There is a light ahead.' [whilst looking at a light in a distance] 538
- c. 'There is a blue-coated figure there.' [whilst looking at a blue-coated policeman] 538
- d. 'He is smiling.' [whilst looking at a smiling man leaving the exam room] 539

As Pryor notes, which propositions count as JPs may well depend on training and vary from man to man. So we can only identify JPs relative to a particular person. 539

I register the following worry:

(14-14) Possible objection: OK, but why then is the fact of immediate justification not a psychological fact? We can spin a psychological explanation why you don't *see* that car as a Honda, and why a Honda worker does. The training differential will be a chapter in that explanation. And we'll say that there is nothing over and above that explanation that can be said about the putatively 'epistemic' fact of you requiring further propositions, and the Honda worker not requiring them. Pryor says that he is concerned with transitions from experiences to belief. With JPs the transition is immediate. But that's precisely the issue: isn't this transition, within a particular person, a wholly psychological fact about that person? ? 540

THEORY-LADENNESS. The following objection may be raised:

(14-15) T-L objection: Since what you see is influenced by what you believe (=*K*, your background beliefs), pure seeing can't be a sole justification of your belief. 540

Pryor's responses will use the features of IJP in (14-9). He distinguishes, first, between the causal role of background beliefs and their justificatory (normative) role. This mirrors the familiar distinction between the *context of discovery* and the *context of justification*. He argues that the causal role of *K* (=theory-ladenness in the context of discovery) is irrelevant for dogmatism. The causal role of *K* should tell us how you came to have these experiences in the first place. Dogmatism tells us how you transition from experiences to beliefs—e.g., from seeing your hands to believing that you have hands. 🔍

Pryor then claims that the normative role of K is compatible with dogmatism. That's because the immediate justification provided by the P -experience is only *prima facie*, not a conclusive one. Thus K may be offered as its defeater.

Staying in the context of discovery, T-L may also be interpreted as a claim that K is necessary to even have the P -experience in the first place. But that's OK with dogmatism, because it does not entail the epistemic autonomy of IJP. 540

Finally, T-L may mean that K plays a causal role not, or not only, in generating your P -experience, but also in generating your *prima facie* justification for P . Pryor replies that the meaning of this claim is unclear. But our objection (14-14) may be used exactly to spell out this role of K . 541

MOORE AGAIN. In some ways Pryor's programme is more modest than Moore's. He doesn't want to extend dogmatism to the large and amorphous group of common-sense beliefs. In other ways, it is much more ambitious, since we base our response to the sceptic on a series of strong claims about the relation between experience, belief, and justification.

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