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## The Perils of Dogmatism

*In Memory of Paul Tomassi*

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‘Dogmatism’ is a term renovated by James Pryor (2000) to stand for a certain kind of neo-Moorean response to scepticism and an associated conception of the architecture of basic perceptual warrant. Pryor runs the response only for (some kinds of) perceptual knowledge but here I will be concerned with its general structure and potential as a possible global anti-sceptical strategy. Something like it is arguably also present in recent writings of Burge<sup>1</sup> and Peacocke.<sup>2</sup> If the global strategy could succeed, it would pre-empt any role in the diagnosis and treatment of sceptical paradoxes for the kind of notion of *entitlement* (rational, non-evidential warrant) I have proposed elsewhere (Wright 2004). But my overarching contention will be that dogmatism is, generally and locally, too problematic a stance to be helpful in that project.

### I Neo-Mooreanism, dogmatism, liberalism, and conservatism

In recent literature Moore’s ‘Proof’ of the existence of an external world is customarily represented as the transition from a single premise:

Here is a hand,

<sup>1</sup> Burge (1993) 458–9; and (2003), 264.

<sup>2</sup> Peacocke (2003), chs. 3 and 4.

endorsed as a thinker (takes herself to) hold(s) up her hand in clear view in front of her face in a state of cognitive lucidity, etc., to the conclusion

There is an external material world,

the transition being mediated by the conceptual necessity that any hand is a material object existing in space. Familiarly, there has been general agreement both that the Proof is unsuccessful—though less clarity about how to describe the respects in which it is unsuccessful, or why it is so<sup>3</sup>—and that one who offers it as a response to material world scepticism<sup>4</sup> is somehow naïvely missing the point, or underestimating the severity of the challenge that the sceptical arguments present. We can regard as neo-Moorean any view of the Proof which rejects, or at least importantly qualifies, these normal negative assessments. So a neo-Moorean will hold, for example, that the proof is unsuccessful only for certain relatively specialized purposes, or when addressed to a particularly, perhaps unreasonably, demanding audience; and that, while it may be ineffective as directed against a sceptical adversary, it does at least demand a response from the sceptic,—a response which may betray an (in the best case, unmotivated) assumption that is somehow pivotal in the generation of sceptical doubt, and that one who advances the Proof may be seen as (tacitly) repudiating.

By these criteria, the *dogmatism* canvassed by James Pryor is prototypically neo-Moorean. The best way of bringing out the essence of the view is to contrast it with a diagnosis—following Pryor, we can call it the *conservative* diagnosis—of the failure of Moore's Proof which I have myself advanced in previous work. According to that diagnosis, the 'Proof' fails because the unarticulated ground for its premise—the thinker's sensory and bodily experience as she holds up her hand—is fitted to support the premise

Here is a hand

only in a certain kind of conducive informational context. It is a familiar Quinean thought that empirical evidence generally varies in its supportive potential as a function of the 'theory'—collateral background beliefs—within whose stage-setting it is enlisted. Suppose I am awakened from slumber by a brightness outside my bedroom window. It may depend on my knowledge of the lunar cycle and the positioning of my bedroom whether that is best taken as evidence for a setting full moon, or a stationary car headlight. Likewise, according to the conservative diagnosis, it is only in the context of the (presumed) collateral information that there is, indeed,

<sup>3</sup> Coliva (forthcoming a) provides a useful overview of the various analyses of the proof's failure offered in the literature, as well as an original diagnosis of the apparent *obviousness* of its failure.

<sup>4</sup> As it is by no means clear that Moore himself intended to do—cf. Coliva (forthcoming b), n. 1.

an external material world at all (and more, that ordinary sense experience is a more or less reliable guide to how things are with it) that the Moorean hand-waver's experience is fitted to support the Proof's premise. Replace that information with reason to believe that he is instead a handless brain in a vat, whose every experience is controlled by a computer-program designed by an evil scientist, and the experience supports instead the claim that

The computer is right now implementing a phase of its program which requires me to suffer the illusion of having a hand and holding it up in front of my face.

According to the conservative diagnosis, then, the Proof fails because its premise is without evidence unless its conclusion is *already* part of the subject's information. It is only in an informational context in which the conclusion is already warranted (or known) that the relevant evidence can provide for warrant (or knowledge) of the premise. So the proof suffers from a kind of epistemic circularity: to take it that one knows its premise (on occurrent perpetual grounds) is to presuppose that one already knows the conclusion. Nor, assuming one does indeed know the premise, is any additional warrant conferred on the conclusion by Moore's simple reasoning. In that sense, the Proof fails to transmit to its conclusion any warrant one may have for its premise. To invoke Pryor's own useful summary way of looking at the matter: in Moore's Proof the logical order of premise and conclusion inverts their epistemic order. In a proof which is to generate a reason to believe its conclusion, by contrast, the orders must coincide.

The conservative diagnosis is not yet *per se* sceptical. Generalized to any proposition about the local perceptible environment, it says merely that apparent perceptual evidence for the proposition in question has that status only in an informational context which includes the existence of an external material world, broadly manifest to our perceptual faculties. We get a sceptical paradox when we further accept that the only justification for accrediting our informational context with that component would have to depend upon first getting warrant for particular propositions about the local perceptual environment—(compare the contention that the only justification we could have for accepting the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis would be by first getting experience-based justification for particular claims about the operation of the computer and the nature of its program). If that is accepted, then the basic architecture of perceptual warrant involves a hopeless circularity, comparable to that alleged in simple Humean scepticism about enumerative induction.<sup>5</sup>

Still, the conservative diagnosis can be maintained without sceptical cost provided there is a way of making out that we may indeed rationally avail ourselves of the

<sup>5</sup> I think it is felicitous to call this broad genre of sceptical argument *Humean*. I have characterized the argument in detail—terming it the I-II-III argument—in various writings. See Wright (2004).

collateral informational presuppositions which it calls for. One strategy for doing so—the path of *entitlement*—is to pursue the possibility that we possess a rational but non-evidential warrant for acceptance of those presuppositions. According to dogmatism, by contrast, the conservative diagnosis is already fundamentally mistaken. For the warrant provided by sense experience for propositions of the kind typified by ‘Here is a hand’ when entertained in the Moorean setting is not, in the dogmatist view, just one more ‘theory-conditioned’ kind of empirical warrant—albeit one drawing on a minimally controversial, maximally general ‘theory’—but is rather unconditional and immediate. To have one’s experience represent it to one as if *P* is true just is, absent other relevant information, to be presented with a defeasible warrant to take it that *P* is true. One does not need to presuppose any particular ‘theory’ or body of information—though the possession of certain kinds of unconducive information (for instance, that one is a brain-in-a-vat) will undermine the warrant-conferring power of the experience.

One way of articulating the dispute is thus to centre it on two construals of the sense in which the proposition that there is an external material world, broadly manifest in normal sense experience, is a presupposition of the evidential support of sense-experience for claims of the kind typified by ‘Here is a hand’ in the Moorean setting. According to the conservative, it is a presupposition in the sense that it something which a thinker requires some kind of prior reason to accept before he may rationally regard his experience as carrying such evidential force.<sup>6</sup> According to the dogmatist—or, as Pryor sometimes says, the *liberal*<sup>7</sup>—it needs to be presupposed only in the sense that a thinker who has reason to regard it as untrue may not rationally regard his experience as carrying such evidential force. No collateral epistemic achievement is required. The thinker need not even consider the issue. Not even a collateral entitlement, without epistemic work, is required. All that is required is that he lack reason to disbelieve it. The ordinary view of our situation in a material

<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that the required ‘prior reason’ must be deliberately thought through or entertained by the beneficiary. The best versions of the notion of rational entitlement will belong with a kind of ‘welfare-state’ epistemology: entitlements will be benefits by which one may live well, doxastically speaking, without having to do any epistemic work by way of qualification for them.

<sup>7</sup> I ought not to give an impression that Pryor’s use of the terms is interchangeable. Roughly, “dogmatism”, for Pryor, is restricted to perception: it is the view that the acquisition of knowledge, or warrant, by perception requires no additional, enabling information, though it of course has potential informational defeaters. Thus both reliabilism and McDowellian direct realism, as well as Pryor’s own internalist view, count as kinds of dogmatism. “Liberalism” denotes a view about a specific type of defeater (below, an “authenticity condition”) in relation to a specific genre of evidence: to wit, that no reason to discount the obtaining of the defeater is required before one can capitalise on evidence of that genre—it is enough that one has no reason to suppose that such a defeater obtains.

world, impinging in various helpful ways upon our sense-organs, is presupposed only in the sense that it is required to be something which there is no reason to disbelieve.

It merits emphasis before we go any further that Pryor's own invocation of dogmatism is extremely sparing and selective, restricted to certain kinds of perceptual content. There could, in contrast, be a kind of *global* dogmatism. This would be something like the view that for every kind of broad region of our thought which can be called into (Humean) sceptical doubt—matter, other minds, the laws of nature, the future, and the substantial past—there is a kind of basic evidential warrant whose architecture is properly conceived along liberal lines: a type of evidence to possess which is, absent all other relevant information, *eo ipso* to be warranted in accepting a specific proposition of the kind proper to the region in question. One might attempt so to conceive the evidence of others' sayings and doings for their mental states, the evidence of one's own apparent memories for one's past, the evidence of observed regularities for hypotheses of natural law and specific predictions about the future, and the evidence of testimony for—well, for claims about whatever subject-matters a theorist thinks that testimony provides a kind of default warrant. And all these tendencies would stand opposed to corresponding forms of conservatism, with the attendant, overshadowing threat of Humean scepticism. Pryor himself, to stress again, has explicitly proposed dogmatism only for a small sub-species of the propositions which we normally take ordinary sense-experience as fitted to confirm. One question we shall come to later is whether he manages to give a principled demarcation of just which propositions these are. But our initial and principal interest will be in the structure of the proposal: in the very idea, at the heart of liberalism, of evidential relationships which are both defeasible but, in the sense noted, basic and unconditional.

## II General Observations and Possible Constraints:

### (i) The Simple Elevation Hypothesis

Whenever the belief that *P* is formed for reasons, we will characteristically be able to find a number of justificational triads, each of the following form

- 1 A kind of evidence *that P* that constitutes the reasons for believing it
- 2 The proposition *that P* itself
- 3 An *authenticity-condition*

Examples are legion. Here are five:

<i>Moore</i>	<i>Zebras</i>	<i>Red Wall</i>	<i>Stranger</i>	<i>Deduction</i>
1 Experience as of a hand in front of my face	1 Observation of zebra-like animals	1 Observation of a red-looking wall	1 S tells you <i>that P</i>	1 Certain data given as premises
2 Here is a hand	2 Those animals are zebras	2 That wall is red	2 <i>P</i>	2 A conclusion
3 There is a material world	3 Those animals are not cleverly disguised mules	3 That wall is not a white wall bathed in red light	3 S is not likely to be untruthful	3 The inference from premises to conclusion is valid

In each case the third element of the triad—the authenticity-condition—is related to the first two like this: a thinker who doubted 3 could not rationally believe 2 just on the basis of evidence 1. Notice that the pattern runs both in defeasible cases—the first four—and in the case of deduction. And, of course, in each of the cases there will be many, many more authenticity-conditions besides those listed.<sup>8</sup>

Let a *warrant* for a belief be, roughly, an all-things-considered mandate for it: to possess a warrant for *P* is to be in a state wherein it is, all things considered, epistemically appropriate to believe *P*. Here I shall require no more specific an understanding of the notion of warrant than that. So the reader is free to construe it further as she thinks fit, whether *externally* (so that, for example, warrant may be constituted by a belief's formation by means of a *de facto* normally reliable cognitive mechanism) or *internally* (so that, for example, warrant may be constituted by a state of information which may be ascertained by a priori reflection and self-knowledge alone), or in more complicated (perhaps admixed) ways. However, I want to contrast the idea of possessing a warrant for *P* with another idea, namely, that of a thinker's *being in position to claim* possession of a warrant for *P*. And by this, I *do* intend something with internalist resonances. I want to understand the claimability of a warrant to be what is at issue when, for example, a philosopher feels that one has not been given everything one needs to address scepticism about the external world, say, merely by impressive arguments—if any such there be—that knowledge can be constituted by reliably generated true belief. To be sure, if the sceptical argument is taken to be to the effect that knowledge of the material world is *impossible*, then it must founder if a reliabilist conception of

<sup>8</sup> Note that authenticity-conditions are *presuppositions of cognitive project* in the sense of Wright (2004); see 191.

knowledge is sound; for even the most skilful monger of paradoxes cannot show that we are not *as a matter of fact* so situated in a material world that our cognitive faculties reliably generate mostly true beliefs about it. But the residual dissatisfaction with the externalist suggestion as a response to scepticism is that it merely points to a congenial *possibility*: nothing has been offered to put us in position to claim that it, rather than one of the many contrasting uncongenial sceptical scenarios, actually obtains.

It is important to realize that there is no room to articulate this dissatisfaction—whose mitigation I shall take to be a cardinal objective of the traditional epistemological project, properly conceived—merely by setting it as an assertion of second order ignorance: as the claim that, even if we, as it were, externally know all kinds of things about the material world, we do not know that we do. For the latter claim is, when knowledge is externally construed, no less presumptuous than the original first-order sceptical claim. The belief that we know all kinds of things about the material world may itself be a reliably generated true belief. The dissatisfaction—if felt at all—needs to be articulated in terms of the absence of a kind of assurance which cannot be remedied merely by external cognitive achievement. Since any epistemic operator, including—to be sure—the proposed ‘... *is in position to claim*’, may always be subjected to externalist construal by an awkward customer, that may seem to leave us in difficulty when it comes to providing a cogent articulation of the dissatisfaction in question. A resolute externalist may simply refuse to hear anything as an expression of it—the suggestion that mere reliabilism provides us with no resources to challenge a scepticism focused not on the possibility of knowledge in a targeted region but on our right to claim it, may be dismissed as just as unsupported as regular first-order scepticism.

Fortunately (or unfortunately), this is not a dialectically stable stance. For consider how externalism promises to address simple first-order closure scepticism about knowledge. A sceptical scenario, SH, is selected whose obtaining is incompatible with the truth of any of a wide class of ordinary beliefs that we customarily regard as knowledgeable. It is alleged that we have no knowledge enabling us to discount SH. So, by closure, none of the beliefs in question is knowledgeable. Assuming that no issue is to be raised about closure, the only room for manoeuvre is to challenge the allegation that we cannot know that SH does not obtain. The externalist counter will be precisely that this has not been shown: that for all that the sceptical argument has established, we *may* know that SH does not obtain—if, for example, the belief that it does not obtain is ‘safe’: is true in all relevantly close worlds. But consider what happens if we try to express this counter using an externally construed outer operator—it may as well be the very same operator—so that what it comes to is the contention that

We cannot know that: we cannot know that SH does not obtain.

Since the obtaining of SH would ensure that we cannot know that SH does not obtain, the externalist’s counter commits him, by closure, to affirming that

We cannot know that SH does obtain.

But the externalist is committed to regarding that contention, externally construed, as just as inappropriate, and for the very same reasons, as the sceptical premise that we cannot know that SH does not obtain. On the contrary, we *may*, she should allow, know that SH does obtain—if, for example, the belief that it does obtain is safe: is true in all relevantly close worlds. To be sure, that is not a belief we actually—most of us—have. But the issue here is the *possibility* of knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

Moral: without recourse to some internalist notion of epistemic warrant, there is no prospect of utilizing external notions of warrant to address even the simplest of sceptical paradoxes. Naturally, merely to make that observation is not yet to explain how the requisite internal notion, or notions, are best to be construed. But when even externalist-minded theorists must, seemingly, have tacit recourse to them in bringing their characteristic proposals to bear on the challenge of scepticism, we are, I think, entitled to proceed on the assumption that some such notions are in good-standing and, more, are deeply rooted in our understanding of the issues and challenges in the vicinity.

Very well. Suppose now that a thinker *T* is presented with evidence 1 for a proposition 2, for whose relevance 3 is an authenticity-condition. Then here are two types of question we can ask about the situation:

Q<sup>level1</sup>: What independent epistemic relation must *T* bear to 3 if having 1 (or warrantably believing an associated proposition recording the possession of that evidence) is to give her warrant for 2?

Q<sup>level2</sup>: What independent epistemic relation must *T* bear to 3 if, when 1 does give her warrant for 2, she is *to be in position to claim* a warrant for 2?

Q<sup>level1</sup> and Q<sup>level2</sup> will get the same answer if it is supposed that the very having of warrant puts one in position to claim it. The latter may be true on certain internalist conceptions of warrant. (It will be for Pryor to say whether it is true when warrant is understood in the kind of internalist way in which, unless I misread him, *he* wants to understand it.) However, it will not be true—at least not a priori true—on externalist

<sup>9</sup> This way of making the point exploits the factivity of knowledge. But that is inessential. Suppose merely that whatever the external conditions are that are conceived as making for warrant, they cannot be met simultaneously for both the belief that *P* and the belief that not-*P*, and that warrant is closed under (obvious) entailment. Then if *W*(SH), it follows that  $\sim W(\sim SH)$ . So if the latter—the sceptical premise—is to be deemed unwarranted, so must be *W*(SH). Hence the externalist's complaint, that the sceptical premise is unwarranted, requires an endorsement of  $\sim WW(SH)$ . But how, when *W* is construed externally, is that endorsement to be philosophically justified? Whatever it externally takes to make a belief warranted, it cannot be ruled out just by philosophical reflection that the condition is met by my (perhaps perverse) belief that SH. If it is, *W*(SH) will be true. And now, what if I believe that too, and what if this belief likewise meets the requisite external conditions? Who is to say it doesn't?



conceptions of warrant possession in general and when being in position to claim warrant is understood as I have proposed.

What is dogmatism saying about the two questions? We take a dogmatist view of any particular such triad when we affirm that  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  gets this answer:

A thinker's having the evidence 1 suffices to give her warrant for 2 provided she has no reason to doubt 3,

where having no reason to doubt is ensured in particular by having no relevant independent information of any kind that bears on 3.<sup>10</sup> But what about  $Q^{\text{level2}}$ ? Does dogmatism intend to answer  $Q^{\text{level2}}$  at all? If not, it says nothing whatever to respond to (Humean) scepticism about claims of warrant. So its interest for the traditional epistemological project is immediately severely limited. But if so, what is its intended answer?

There is a simple proposal which, if correct, leaves dogmatism with no option but to answer  $Q^{\text{level2}}$  in one particular way. The proposal is that of the *Simple Elevation Hypothesis*:

In general, whatever conditions C (a priori necessarily) confer warrant upon a thinker T for acceptance of 2, it will suffice to put T in position to claim warrant for 2 that she be in position to claim that C are met

Someone might demur from this on account of the following gap: conditions C may obtain, so that T has a warrant for 2, and T may be in position to claim that C are met, and yet in no position to claim warrant for 2 because she doesn't know that C are warrant-conferring for 2. However, I do not think this is a plausible reservation for a *dogmatist* to have. It is an intuitive strength of dogmatism that it seems to account for our intuitions about what it takes to have warrant for simple, perceptual beliefs on the part of thinkers who for the most part lack the conceptual resources even to formulate, still less to take attitudes to propositions articulating authenticity-conditions. Consider a 6-years-old

<sup>10</sup> Notice that the dogmatist stance can perfectly sensibly be authenticity-condition relative: one may hold that the answer above is appropriate only for certain choices of relevant authenticity-conditions for 3, while for others a conservative view is appropriate. I already emphasised that Pryor's dogmatism is local to the relation between perceptual experience and certain kinds of proposition concerning the external world—those involving 'perceptually basic' concepts. However, the observation just made involves a further potential locality. It is open to a dogmatist to insist that, even where perceptually basic judgments are concerned, experience may warrant them in the liberal manner only where certain authenticity-conditions are concerned, and that others *do* need to be part of a thinker's presumed information before she may warrantably take the experience at face value. This is not, as far as I am aware, Pryor's view. But it is a possible view. Both the very existence of a material world and the thinker's occurrent perceptual receptiveness are authenticity-conditions for the transition from 1 to 2 in *Moore*. There would be no incoherence in combining a liberal view of the role of the first with a conservative view of the second.

child, Sophie. Sophie will form simple beliefs about her local environment—that her bedroom is untidy, that Tabitha is sleeping in her basket, and so on—purely on the basis of her experiences, and we are inclined, just as dogmatism would seem to predict, to say that these are beliefs for which she is fully warranted. Conservatism, by contrast, represents these warrants as hostage to the possession of collateral information about authenticity-conditions—hostages which, in the absence of any ability of Sophie's even to entertain such information, are presumably not redeemed. But notice that our inclination to grant Sophie's warrants is not in any way qualified if, possessed of at least a rudimentary mastery of the verb 'to know' and asked what she knows about her bedroom at the moment, or the cat's whereabouts, she replies that *she knows* that it is untidy, and that *she knows* that Tabitha is in her basket. These are effectively claims of warrant but they seem just as justified and rational, in the circumstances, as the claims they embed. It would be quite out of keeping with the general tenor of dogmatism to insist that they are not so—that warrant for them requires in addition a sophisticated piece of epistemological knowledge.

The Simple Elevation Hypothesis forces dogmatism to extend its distinctive thesis about the possession of certain kinds of warrant to the corresponding claims of warrant. More generally, it allows us test answers to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  by appeal to our intuitions about *claimable* warrants. The dogmatist answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  has it that it suffices for possession of warrant for 2 that T has the evidence 1 and no reason to doubt 3. So, by the Simple Elevation Hypothesis, it should suffice for T to be in position to claim warrant for 2 that she is in position to claim both that she has evidence 1 and that she has no reason to doubt 3. That is the answer that dogmatism must give to  $Q^{\text{level2}}$  unless the Simple Elevation Hypothesis is rejected. But is that answer acceptable in general?

To fix ideas, consider the case of *Stranger*. Suppose the dogmatist answer is here correct: it suffices to get warrant for *P* by testimony that one be told that *P* in a context where one has no reason to doubt the truthfulness of one's informant. Then by the Simple Elevation Hypothesis, it should suffice to be in position to claim a testimonial warrant that one be in position to claim that one was told that *P* and that one has no reason to regard one's opponent as untruthful. But that answer seems manifestly insufficient. Imagine the natural dialogue:

'Why do you believe that *P*?'

'Because S told me and I have no reason to regard him as untruthful or likely to be mistaken'

'So: you take it as reasonable to believe a stranger on a matter like whether *P* unless there is evidence that they are untruthful or likely to be mistaken'

'I *do not need to have a view about that*. Let that issue be open. I repeat: S told me and I have no reason to regard him as untruthful or likely to be mistaken. That suffices for warrant. I therefore claim my warrant for *P*.'

There is a strong intuition that the last response is irrational, or epistemically irresponsible. After his first answer, and once the issue is raised, the speaker *does* need to take the stance that it is reasonable to believe the testimony of strangers unless there is reason to regard them as untruthful or likely to be mistaken—or back off his claim to testimonial warrant for *P*. If so, then the testimony-dogmatist answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  is faulty unless the Simple Elevation Hypothesis is wrong.

*Can* the Simple Elevation Hypothesis be wrong? We noted one way in which it might be questioned: the thought was the simple one that being in position to claim that conditions obtain which in fact constitute a warrant for a particular belief may none the less fail to put a thinker in position to claim warrant for that belief if she does not know that fact—is not enough of an epistemologist, as it were. We also noted that this does not seem a good tack for dogmatism to try. But there is another point. Irresponsibility in general is relative to the ability to understand relevant possibilities and take relevant corresponding precautions. So a child may be open to no charge of irresponsibility in acting on information which an adult who shared her objectives could not responsibly act on unless assured that a number of precautions were in place. Might it be that the single most impressive piece of evidence in favour of dogmatism—our apparent intuitions about what it takes to confer warrant on the perceptual beliefs of the young and unsophisticated—is actually drawing credibility from a version of this point? In that case, it would be true that an innocent might achieve warrant for ‘Here is a hand’ purely on the basis of her experience and, while lacking any relevant information about authenticity-conditions, only and purely because incapable of entertaining, or appraising, statements about such conditions. As soon as she acquired the conceptual and intellectual wherewithal to understand how their failure would invalidate the warranting power of sensory impressions, she would exile herself from a position of innocence in which there was no obligation even to take a view about the obtaining of authenticity-conditions, still less to assure oneself that they did obtain, or that it was justifiable to suppose so.

If this were the situation, the Simple Elevation Hypothesis would remain unchallenged. The mismatch between the dogmatist’s answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  and the answer it enforces, in accordance with the Simple Elevation Hypothesis, to  $Q^{\text{level2}}$ , would be explained by the consideration that the very conceptual sophistication required by the practice of *self-ascription* of warrant of the kind illustrated by the dialogue somehow ‘ups the ante’: that it raises the standards for *having* warrant in the first place. So the liberal answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  would be correct only for relatively unsophisticated subjects; and no answer, liberal or conservative, would be generally correct.

Much more should be said about this, but I have no space to pursue the matter here. What is clear is that there is a dilemma for dogmatism in any area where a dialogue like that above for *Stranger* seems to accord with our intuitions (prejudices?)

about what it takes to be in position to claim warrant. If the dogmatist agrees with the Simple Elevation Hypothesis, these intuitions strongly suggest that his answer at  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  is wrong. He might save that answer by rejecting the Simple Elevation Hypothesis, or by pursuing the train of thought just canvassed. But, either way, he concedes that the answer to  $Q^{\text{level2}}$  that one might expect dogmatism to offer—the answer enforced by the Simple Elevation Hypothesis together with the dogmatist answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$ —is incorrect. And in that case dogmatism has nothing to offer when the sceptical challenge concerns our being in position to claim the wide sweeps of (perceptual) knowledge which we ordinarily take ourselves to have—and only little to offer, accordingly, to one pursuing the traditional epistemological project.

### III General Observations and Possible Constraints: (ii) Warrant Transmission

A second kind of potential control on answers to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  is provided by considerations of warrant transmission. In the typical run of cases, there will be no entailment in a justificational triad,  $\{1, 2, 3\}$ , from proposition 2 to the satisfaction of the authenticity-condition, 3. The redness of the demonstrated wall does not entail, for example, that the subject is not colour-blind; and the truth of S's testimony does not entail—the actual example—that S is characteristically truthful. But the first three examples in the table—*Moore*, *Zebras* and *Red Wall*—were precisely selected to illustrate how the satisfaction of certain authenticity-conditions may indeed sometimes be a consequence of the very proposition, 2, that is up for warrant. In any case of this kind—let's say: in any case where a justificational triad has the *entailment feature*—the correctness of the conservative answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  will entail that the warrant given by 1 for 2 will fail to transmit to 3. A conservative answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  will be (something like) this:

A thinker's having the evidence 1 suffices to give her warrant for 2 only provided she *has independent warrant for 3*

Whenever that answer is correct, it would be absurd to regard 3 as confirmed, across the entailment of it by 2, by the evidence 1. You could not acquire a *first* warrant to think that 3 was satisfied in that way, since you would have to have warrant for 3 already in order to conjure a warrant for 2; nor is it intelligible how such reasoning could *strengthen* a warrant for 3 which you already possessed—for the warrant for 3 cannot, in the circumstances be stronger than the warrant for 2, and the latter, presumably, is bounded by the strength of the demanded anterior warrant for 3. Conservatism, then, predicts failure of warrant transmission in any such case.

Now, while *Moore* may be controversial, the prediction seems right for *Zebras* and *Red Wall*. That is why it was not implausible for Dretske, the author of those examples,<sup>11</sup> to offer them as examples of failure of *Closure*. If in *Zebras*, for instance, the warrant for 2 provided by 1 transmitted to 3, then the observations required by 1 would, in principle, suffice, by the inference from 2, to allow the subject to *learn* that 3 obtained, even though its failure to obtain is a possibility beyond the power of observation, of the envisaged level of refinement, to detect directly. That would be magic indeed! *Mutatis mutandis* for *Red Wall*.

However, on a liberal view of the justificational architecture involved in these examples, it remains unclear why there should be any issue about the transmissibility of the warrants involved. What could stand in the way of transmission of a warrant from a premise to an obvious, valid conclusion when no information about, or epistemic attitude to, the latter is prerequisite for appreciating the force of the evidence for the former? How is it ever going to be possible to learn anything by inference if there can be a good issue about transmission of warrant even in such a case? Dogmatism, it would appear, should predict that there will be no transmission worries in any justificational triad with the entailment feature for which the liberal view is correct. So our intuitions (defeasible as they may be) about warrant transmission can be used to test liberal and conservative views in such cases. If warrant seems to transmit to an authenticity-condition, that is strong evidence that its role in the support provided by the relevant kind of evidence for the relevant kind of belief is not as conceived by conservatism; but if it seems to fail to transmit, that is evidence that things are not as conceived by the liberal.

The application of this proposed control would obviously be compromised, however, if there are other kinds of pathology of argument which, though in some respects presenting like transmission-failure, are different and are consistent, moreover, with liberalism. Pryor (2004) has attempted to argue just this, for the case of *Moore* at least, by suggesting a distinction between transmission-failure properly so regarded, and a certain kind of *dialectical ineffectiveness*. Clearly, even a warrant-transmissive inference may be dialectically ineffective for a thinker who is already convinced of the falsity of the conclusion. In any such case, that antecedent conviction may overpower the evidence for the premises. More subtly—this is Pryor's actual thought—in the case of justificational triads with the entailment feature, doubt about the authenticity-condition stated by the conclusion is mandated by dogmatism itself as defeating the warranting power of the evidence for the premise. So *Moore* will quite properly be regarded as ineffective by a sceptic who doubts the existence of the external world, even if warrant-transmissive for an ordinary common-sense thinker like *Moore* himself. Furthermore, it is to be expected that we non-sceptics, tacitly recognizing that

<sup>11</sup> Dretske (1970).

the argument is no good when directed against such a sceptic, will likewise be inclined to dismiss it in the dialectical setting in which it was offered—when, that is, it is directed against scepticism—even though free of doubt about the conclusion ourselves.

I think there is no doubt that dogmatism does indeed predict that *Moore* should involve no failure of transmission. Still it is, to be sure, a further question whether the typical reaction of frustration with it is correctly diagnosed as an intuition of transmission-failure.<sup>12</sup> According to the proposal just canvassed, it is not. Rather, the frustration betrays—so it is open to Pryor to suggest—merely a less specific sense that the Proof is no good for its purpose. There are other ways that proofs may be no good for their purposes besides by being invalid, by containing false or unwarranted premises, or by virtue of failures of transmission.

The distinction between transmission-failure and dialectical ineffectiveness of the kind diagnosed by Pryor is clearly a good one in general. There is, however, an evident problem in the attempt to invoke the latter notion in a diagnosis of *Moore*. Liberalism and conservatism precisely divide over the question whether *agnosticism* about an authenticity-condition defeats the relevant kind of evidence: the conservative holds that it does; the liberal that it does not. So Pryor's diagnosis cannot kick in if the intended audience of a proof merely (considers that it) has *no* relevant information bearing on whether an entailed authenticity-condition obtains or not. To doubt that there is an external world in the manner needed to trigger Pryor's diagnosis has to be: to (incline to) believe that *there is no material world*. It cannot be merely a matter of lack of conviction, or disinclination to the contrary belief. Yet the doubt that is the stock-in-trade of scepticism is exactly that. Scepticism argues that we have no adequate reason to believe that there is a material world. It is no part of scepticism to take the further step to the *denial* of matter—to *idealism*.<sup>13</sup> If Moore's Proof is indeed transmissive, it should be able—at least for all the liberal account of its justificational architecture has to say about the point—to produce a warrant to believe in the external material world for such an agnostic. The sheer occurrence of suitable experiences ought to be enough to trigger a flow of warrant down to the common-sense world-view in exactly the manner articulated by the Proof. It is therefore bad for Pryor's view if—as I suggest it does—the sense remains strong that *Moore* produces *no* reason to believe its conclusion, not merely for one antecedently doubtful of it but even for one merely antecedently unconvinced of it.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Coliva (forthcoming) for exploration of other possibilities.

<sup>13</sup> As stressed also in Coliva (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> As Annalisa Coliva has pointed out to me, a *principled* agnosticism about the existence of the external world—one not merely involving open-mindedness, or disinclination to a view, but resting on an argued stance that there can be no adequate evidence for or against the disputed matter—will have a motive for rejecting Moore's Proof which is not encompassed by the kind of Pryorian dialectical ineffectiveness characterized above. Such an agnostic thinker will discount the evidence of experience for

The proposed constraint on answers to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  emerges from this discussion in the following form. For justificational triads with the entailment feature: (i) conservatism predicts failures of transmission of warrant; (ii) liberalism predicts that there should be no such failure; (iii) the distinction between mere dialectical ineffectiveness and transmission-failure proper turns on whether cogency is jeopardized by mere agnosticism—perhaps better: open-mindedness—about the satisfaction of the relevant authenticity-condition.

## IV Four Perils for dogmatism in general

With these preparations, our catalogue of the forewarned Perils can be brisk. In this section, I shall outline four potential trouble-spots for dogmatism wherever it is proposed. In the next, concluding section, I'll sketch one more vexation for Pryor's specific proposals about perceptually warranted belief.

### 1 The pervasive threat of the insufficiency of the liberal account at second level

The pattern of dialogue outlined above for the case of Stranger and warrant by testimony may be replicated for any justificational triad, with the impression of irresponsibility that it provokes persisting—I conjecture—more or less exceptionlessly. Try it for the case of any belief  $P$  about one's local environment formed on the basis of visual experience

'Why do you believe that  $P$ ?'

'Because it looks to me to be the case that  $P$  and I have no reason to regard my visual system as defective.

'So: you take it that it is reasonable to believe that your visual system is likely to be trustworthy unless there is evidence that it may not be functioning properly?'

'*I do not need to have a view about that.* I repeat: it looks to me that  $P$  and I have no reason to doubt that my visual system is working properly. I therefore claim warrant for  $P$ .'

the Proof's premise, 'Here is a hand', not because he disbelieves the relevant authenticity-condition—he can be open-minded about the existence of the external world—but because he regards the evidence as inadequate in principle in any case. It is an interesting question whether the ineffectiveness of the Proof for such an agnostic thinker demands a diagnosis distinct from transmission failure. However, nothing will turn on it in the sequel, so I defer discussion to another occasion. Pryor is of course aware of the issue—see his (2004) at pp. 367–8.

As before, all the dialogue does is to export the liberal view of the architecture of a justificational triad—here:

*Eyes*

1 Visual experience as of *P*

being the case

2 *P*

3 My visual system is working  
properly

up to level 2, in accordance with the Simple Elevation Hypothesis, so that it is presented as sufficient for a thinker to be in position to *claim* warrant for *P* that she be in position to claim that exactly those conditions are met which dogmatism views as sufficient for *having* warrant. And, as before, there is a very strong sense that the last response is irrational, or epistemically irresponsible.<sup>15</sup> After his first answer, and once the issue is raised, the speaker *does* need to take the stance that it is reasonable to believe that his visual system is working properly unless there is evidence to the contrary—or back off his claim to visual warrant for *P*. If so, then the perceptual-dogmatist answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  is faulty unless the Simple Elevation Hypothesis is wrong. But even if the Simple Elevation Hypothesis is wrong, that is of no very great avail to dogmatism since the point remains that there is a mismatch between the conditions which dogmatism regards as sufficient for warrant-possession and the conditions which our intuitions—at least as elicited by the dialogues—regard as necessary for warrant-claiming. Some of the latter have no counterparts among the former. So even in the best case, when the Simple Elevation Hypothesis is rejected, dogmatism has nothing to contribute to those of the challenges and problems of the traditional epistemological project that concern the level of claims.

As suggested, this difficulty threatens to be pervasive.

## 2 The problem of stand-off defeaters

The dogmatist view of any particular justificational triad returns this answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$ :

A thinker's having the evidence 1 suffices to give her warrant for 2 provided she has no reason to doubt 3

'Doubt' in English equivocates between uncertainty and disbelief (belief that not). However, for liberalism, crucially, 'having no reason to doubt' must pertain to the latter. For liberalism requires the status of having no reason to doubt to be consistent

<sup>15</sup> Here is a possible explanation why. In claiming visual warrant for *P* while disclaiming any view about the likelihood of proper visual function, the subject is steering dangerously close to claiming warrant for *P* while disclaiming any view about the likelihood of being right.



with having no relevant information either way—that is the whole point. So it appears the proviso, as it must be intended, is met by any thinker whose evidence—other than that given by 1—provides no sufficient reason for a view on 3, and thereby mandates open-mindedness on the matter.

But this cannot possibly be correct. What if one's evidence balances the scales? Consider an amalgam of *Eyes* and *Red Wall*:

*Red-wall (II)*

- 1 Observation of a red-looking  
wall
- 2 That wall is red
- 3 My visual system is working  
properly

Suppose you are knowledgeably participating in a double-blind trial of a new hallucinogen, affecting just colour vision. Half the trialists have the pill and half a placebo. The trialists are advised that the former group will suffer a temporary systematic inversion of their colour experience, but have no other relevant information, in particular none providing any reason for a view about which group they are in. Clearly this information defeats 1 as a warrant for 2. Its effect is that your evidence 1 now provides no reason whatever for believing 2. But it does not give sufficient reason to *doubt* 3 if that is required to mean: to believe not-3. You should be open-minded about 3.

It seems, then, that it is only when 'having no reason to doubt 3' in liberalism's answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$  is understood as compromised by a situation of balanced evidence for and against 3 that the answer has any plausibility. But balanced evidence for and against is what you have, trivially, in a position of *innocence*, when you have no relevant evidence either way. And there dogmatism precisely wants the warrant for 2 to stand. So, *what's the relevant difference?* Why does mandated neutrality conferred by balanced evidence defeat the warrant provided by 1 for 2, while mandated neutrality conferred by lack of all relevant evidence does no harm?

The conservative has no difficulty with the issue: if a thinker's having evidence 1 suffices to give her warrant for 2 only provided she has *independent warrant for* 3, it is readily intelligible—indeed it is predicted—that mandated open-mindedness about 3 will defeat that warrant. Specifically: once her information requires her to be open-minded about 3, she will fail to meet the condition on 3 demanded by the conservative answer to  $Q^{\text{level1}}$ . However, if, as dogmatism has it, no independent warrant to accept 3 is needed in any case, what of relevance has been lost when one's information mandates open-mindedness?

### 3 What are Pryor's 'priors'?

This is a concern first articulated by Stephen Schiffer.<sup>16</sup> Let us reconsider

*Red-wall*

- 1 Observation of a red-looking wall
- 2 That wall is red
- 3 That wall is not a white wall  
bathed in red light

so that now we once again have a triad with the entailment feature. And suppose 1 is the only relevant evidence you have for 2 and that you have no other relevant evidence bearing on 3. What were your prior conditional probabilities of 2 given 1, and of not-3 given 1, respectively? Suppose your actual reaction to getting evidence 1 is a high degree of confidence—say, no doubt artificially, 90 per cent—in 2. Then, if you are rational, so subject to the laws of classical probability, your prior conditional probability of not-3 on 1 cannot have been higher than 10 per cent. Classical probability requires that a rational thinker acquires confidence that *P* on the basis of evidence *e* only if antecedently disposed to assign a correspondingly low conditional probability on *e* to any claim incompatible with *P*.

According to dogmatism, however, a rational thinker who acquires the evidence 1 and who has no other information bearing on 3—in particular none that should incline him to believe the negation of 3—is fully warranted in accepting 2, and so in discounting the negation of 3, without further ado. If this claim is intended to hold irrespective of the thinker's prior probability for the negation of 3 given 1, then it is in tension with the conception of rationality encoded in the laws of classical probability. If it is intended rather to import the idea that, absent any other relevant information, a rational thinker should assign a higher conditional probability to 2 given 1 than to not-3 given 1, then that seems to demand elucidation by reference to some thesis of the prior rational acceptability of at least some important class of authenticity-conditions—a thesis that would fit naturally with a conservatism that made use of the idea of non-evidential entitlement, but seems quite foreign to dogmatism.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Schiffer (2004), at 175–6.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Peacocke repudiates this objection at 113–15 of Peacocke (2003). After glossing the concern, summarising its upshot as being that: 'It seems from the description of the case that my confidence [that I am not subject to a perceptual illusion] cannot be rationally enhanced simply from the enjoyment of the experience itself...', he then replies that: 'the default entitlement to take... perceptual experience at face value in the absence of good reasons for doubt should be located in a theory of outright, all-or-nothing, propositional attitudes. These are more fundamental than degree-theoretic attitudes, and I doubt that the outright attitudes can be elucidated in terms of degree-theoretic attitudes. A thinker may simply have no attitudes in advance about the likelihood of

#### 4 'Easy-warrant' issues

Here is a difficulty first pointed out by Stewart Cohen.<sup>18</sup> In all cases where it appears visually to me that *P*, dogmatism allows that I can chalk up a warrant that *P* provided I have no reason to doubt that my visual system is working properly (and have no other defeating information). So in all such cases I am warranted in affirming each member of the pair

<It appears visually to me that *P*; *P* >

Chalk up enough such pairs and I shall have a large body of information recording nothing but matching correlations between my visual appearances and how matters stand in the real world—and indeed a body of information which I can grow as large as I like provided merely that I am fortunate enough to acquire no information at any stage suggestive that my visual system is *not* working properly. Innocence on the matter is bound, it seems, if dogmatism is correct, to inflate into an overwhelmingly inductively supported, rational confidence in the effectiveness of my visual system, just provided I encounter no independently countervailing information. Obviously, the point is independent of the choice of the example of vision and visually apprehensible subject-matter. It will engage whatever the subject matter of *P*, for whatever we conceive of as the relevant cognitive faculties.

This would clearly be an absurd consequence. But dogmatism has an effective response to it.<sup>19</sup> A pool of evidence should be regarded as providing inductive confirmation of a hypothesis only if it is reasonable to consider it as drawing upon a representative sample. And that, in turn, requires that a significant prior probability for the thesis that counter-examples would have shown up in the sample if there are any. But the body of 'confirming' data compiled by chalking up pairs of the form, <It

his being subject to perceptual illusions in his present circumstances. For such a thinker his enjoyment of an experience of a flat surface in front of him will not only entitle him to think that there is a flat surface in front of him. It will, by inference, give him an entitlement to think that he is not subject to an illusion, an entitlement that he did not have antecedently to his having the experience.' It is hard to see how this addresses the issue. Let it be—as Peacocke (merely) asserts—that the warrants that experience supplies for perceptual beliefs are warrants for irreducibly outright attitudes. It is an entirely different thing whether the rational formation of such attitudes should be somehow exempt from the broad constraints to which the degree-theoretic attitudes are subject. Of course, that is exactly what dogmatism must claim. But here is the basic dilemma: if taking myself to have a Peacocke-style entitlement to the outright belief that there is a flat surface in front of me has no bearing on what opinion I should rationally have about the likelihood of being right, then it is nothing I can use to address the sceptical misgiving that, for all I am entitled to think, I am as likely to be right as wrong about any particular perceptual claim. On the other hand, if Peacocke-entitlement *is* to warrant an opinion about likelihoods, it remains utterly unexplained why it is not subject to the broad pattern of constraint, in terms of conditional 'priors', that Schiffer's objection appeals to.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen (2002).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Pryor (2001), 26–8.

appears visually to me that  $P$ ;  $P >$ , in the way described, has no chance of containing any counter-examples to the contention of the reliability of my visual appearances. So it provides no inductive support for that contention in any case, for purely general methodological reasons quite independent of dogmatism.

However, there does remain a real ‘easy-warrant’ problem—the problem of unstoppable transmission in seemingly inappropriate cases. If the dogmatist view of the original *Red Wall* example is right, the visual warrant for 2 transmits to 3: so I get a *visual-cum-inferential* warrant for a claim—viz. that the wall in question is not a white wall bathed in red light—whose falsity would be visually undetectable. Indeed, if one thinks of the original visual warrant for 2 as conferring *knowledge*, then dogmatism has no resources to prevent the conclusion that I can acquire knowledge by vision plus elementary inference of a proposition whose being false would predict my enjoyment of exactly the same visual experience. That is absurd. Its being absurd is just the intuition that prompted Dretske (1970) to regard such cases as failures of Closure. Dretske’s interpretation is, I think, mistaken. Nevertheless, there is no denying the datum.

The problem is once again pervasive, affecting a huge range of cases of justificational triads with the entailment feature. For instance, it afflicts each of

Pain	Seaweed	Lizard	Geiger counter
1 Jones leaps out of the dentist’s chair with a howl	1 Observation of the sea-weed line on the West Sands	1 A bright light is shone on a nocturnal lizard revealing a stripy pattern of brown and black scales	1 A crescendo of rapid clicks is emitted by my Geiger counter
2. The dentist’s drilling just caused Jones a dart of intense pain	2 Here is this morning’s high-water mark	2 That kind of lizard is striped	2 The Geiger counter has detected a strong radiation source nearby
3 Jones is not faking a pain	3 The seaweed was not re-positioned by pranksters to make a point about warrant-transmission	3 That kind of lizard does not very rapidly become striped when irradiated in bright light	3 The Geiger counter is not malfunctioning

The adoption of a dogmatic stance with respect to triads such as these—the normal run of cases—is surely out of the question. But then: which are the cases where it is supposedly correct, and why?<sup>20</sup>

## V An Additional Peril for Perceptual dogmatism

### 5 —Providing a principled restriction of the scope of the dogmatist thesis

In Pryor's view, the answer to the question with which the preceding section concluded is: when the judgement supported by one's experience is in a certain sense *perceptually basic*. A perceptually basic judgement is one whose content an experience may carry as *its own proper content*. The dogmatic cases are those where the experience's consisting in the reception of an appearance that *P* is a fact independent of any issue about *interpretation*, or the background beliefs of the subject.

Two points are salient if Pryor's suggestion is on the right strategic lines. One is that dogmatism will rest squarely on the presupposition that there is a core intrinsic content carried by an experience: a message, as it were, which is just what the experience strictly

<sup>20</sup> It is worth quickly reviewing one line of thought about these cases which, while denying—as I have suggested that dogmatism about them must deny—that they manifest any failure of transmission of warrant, can accommodate the datum to this extent, that in each case it would be acknowledged as absurd to think of the evidence 1 as *improving one's epistemic position* with respect to 3. There are cases where evidence for *P*, which entails *Q*, simultaneously raises the antecedent probability of *P* but lowers that of *Q*. In such cases, *Q* becomes less likely once we have to view it as true, if at all, because *P* is. Example: five snooker balls, two reds, two 'colours', and the cue ball, are placed in a bag. One will be drawn out at random. *P* is the proposition that the selected ball will be a red. *Q* is the proposition that the selected ball will not be the cue ball. The prior probabilities are respectively 40% and 80%. Then we learn that no colour will be selected. On this evidence, the probability of *P* rises to 66% but that of *Q* drops to 66%. Is this what is happening in our catalogue of alleged transmission-failures?

This model might explain a kind of illusion of transmission failure in certain examples, but it cannot plausibly be presented as suggesting an alternative, dogmatism-friendly account of the difficult cases. While it is true that, for example, the prior probability of

3 Jones is not faking a pain

drops once I acquire the evidence that he is at least behaving as if in pain—after all, there are innumerable many ways he might have acted so as to make 3 true which are now ruled out—the disanalogy remains that, in the snooker-ball case, it is intuitively perfectly reasonable to present one's knowledge of the original set-up, plus the new information that no colour will be selected, as direct warrant for, say, betting that the cue ball will not be selected. But absent any other relevant information—about, for example Jones's character and motivation—it would seem manifestly irrational to bet that Jones is not faking purely on the grounds that he is acting as he would if either faking or genuinely suffering a shoot of intense dental pain. Certainly, the matter needs more detailed discussion.

and literally conveys, more basic than anything which, in the context of her collateral information, it may be able additionally to convey to its subject.<sup>21</sup> Second, it would seem that dogmatism will be appropriate as a view about the epistemic relationship between any given kind of evidence and the propositions for which it is evidence only in cases where the former consists in the presentation of appearances that *P* that are intrinsically just that—appearances which carry a certain proper, invariant content. Memory might inherit that feature when based on perceptual experiences that had it in the first place. But it would be a stretch so to conceive of the relation between behaviour and mental states (indeed, at odds with the holism of the intentional)—and yet more of a stretch so to conceive of inductive confirmation. So if Pryor's own account of the province of dogmatism is correct, we shall need to seek elsewhere for materials to address scepticisms about other minds and inductive inference.

Let us scrutinize the proposal more carefully. If there are perceptually basic contents as characterized, then it follows that should such a content be false, the experience that carried it must somehow have misfired—a misperception must be involved. Pryor himself affirms this point, though he does not remark that it is a corollary of the very idea of a perceptually basic judgement as glossed above.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it seems to indicate a usefully clear operational account: an experience dogmatically warrants the belief that *P* just in case, should the belief be false, the explanation must include misperception or some other form of illusion. This leaves Pryor free to accept the conservative diagnosis of the evidential relations in, for example, *Zebras*. No misperception need be involved in coming falsely to believe that the zebra-like animals are zebras—not if the zoo-keeper's fraud is skilful enough. However, it would also seem to put *Red Wall* beyond the scope of a dogmatist account. For it does not follow from my being mistaken about there being a red wall before me that my receiving the appearance of a red wall involved misperception—there need be no misperception precisely in the case when what I am seeing is a white wall cunningly illuminated by red light. Finally, the masthead case of Moore's Proof itself also seems to fall on the wrong side of the line: I may be mistaken about the presence of a hand in front of my face, notwithstanding the convincing visual appearances to the contrary, precisely because I am competently perceiving something that merely looks like a hand.

The point seems utterly general: external things may be mimicked (fake hands), and any property of them may be mimicked, too (mere seeming redness.) It would appear that it is only by restricting perceptually basic contents—at least when characterized

<sup>21</sup> In correspondence, Pryor has suggested that he would not wish to assign subject-invariant basic contents to perceptual experience—the kinds of basic contents that experiences can carry may vary as a function of, e.g., the conceptual resources of the thinker. This complication will not affect the discussion to follow.

<sup>22</sup> See Pryor (2001), n. 13.

as Pryor proposes—to the sphere of *appearances* that the difficulty can be avoided. Only then will error implicate misperception. More specifically, the needed retrenchment would seem to be that a dogmatist account of the relation between visual appearance and material world claims will be appropriate only when the latter are confined to the kind typified by:

Here is something that *looks like* a red wall,

Here is something that *looks like* a hand,

and so on.

How much of a loss is that? It would, to be sure, still be a point of epistemological significance if dogmatism did, indeed, give the correct account of the epistemological architecture even of claims of this restricted kind. For one thing, a version of Moore's Proof would still avoid transmission-failure since, for instance, something that merely looks like a hand will presumably be no less of an external material object than a real hand.

However, for the purposes of the traditional epistemological project, even restricted to the context of warrant for perceptual beliefs, the significance of the correctness of dogmatism, so limited, would be very marginal. For we have, of course, to get beyond claims about how external things appear. Yet with the legitimate scope of dogmatism so restricted, no resources will be to hand to resist an account of the epistemic architecture of the further transition from

Here is something that *looks like* a red wall,

to

Here is something that *is* a red wall,

which represented it as requiring independent warrant for an authenticity condition somewhat along the lines of

External objects are, by and large, as they appear to be.

And the problem of preventing the resulting conservative account of such triads from spawning Humean scepticism about the kind of proposition typified by the second component will then remain to be addressed by other, non-dogmatic, resources.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The ideas of this paper were first presented at my Topics in Epistemology seminar at NYU in Spring 2004. They have subsequently had some circulation via the handouts for that seminar and talks at other institutions, including the University of Texas and the Arché Epistemology Seminar. Part of the material was presented as the first Paul Tomassi Memorial Lecture at the University of Aberdeen in November 2006. I am grateful to the discussants on all these occasions. Special thanks to Annalisa Coliva, David Enoch, Hartry Field, James Pryor, Joshua Schechter and Stephen Schiffer.

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