

## PROBLEMS FOR DOGMATISM

### 1. EXPERIENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Looking at the end of my arms, there appear to be some hands. Am I thereby justified in believing that these are hands? That depends. We can imagine possible scenarios in which it falsely appears to me that I have hands. Perhaps I'm a handless brain-in-a-vat artificially being fed experiences as of a couple of hands before me. Or perhaps my hands have been amputated and replaced by plastic replicas of hands. To the extent that I have reason to suppose that one of these alternative explanations of my experiences is correct, my perceptual justification for supposing that I have hands is undermined. But just what is required for me to be justified in believing that these are hands? In particular, must I also be justified in believing that I am not a handless brain-in-a-vat, do not have fake-hands, am not the victim of a hand-image inducing demon, and so on?

This last question, which will be the focus of this paper, should be clarified in two respects. First, I can hardly be expected to survey all the possible ways that I might be subject to a visual illusion as of hands, and explicitly form justified beliefs that these do not obtain. But there is an important sense in which one can have justification for a proposition P without explicitly believing P or even considering it. I have justification for believing P in this sense if a belief in P is the appropriate attitude to take given my current epistemic state, if I am to take any attitude to it. So for instance, it might never have occurred to me that what I think is my right hand might be a plastic toy which looks just like a hand. But I'm aware that most people have hands, I have no memory of losing a hand, and obviously it would be very difficult to have a hand replaced by a plastic fake-hand without being aware of it. Given all this, it would make sense for me to believe that I do not have fake hands, even if I do not currently believe it. It is justification in this sense that is at issue when we are considering the conditions of perceptual justification (in the jargon, it is propositional not doxastic justification that concerns us).

Second, the crucial question here is not whether I can be justified in believing that I have hands while lacking justification for the denial of alternative hypotheses. Arguably I cannot, given a plausible closure principle for justification. Our question is whether in order for my having a visual experience as of hands to provide justification for the belief that they are hands, I must have justification for denying the alternative skeptical hypotheses which is independent of this visual experience, a justification which is available to me apart from my seeing what appear to be hands.

## 2. DOGMATISM

Those who answer no, have become known as dogmatists.<sup>1</sup> According to dogmatism, my experience as of a hand before me (in the absence of reasons to suspect that I am subject to an illusion) is enough all by itself to provide justification for believing that it's a hand. Independently of the experience, I need not be in a position to justifiably rule out my being a handless brain-in-a-vat, or the victim of a hand-image inducing demon, or being fake-handed, or anything of that sort.

Dogmatism is really a general thesis giving conditions for perceptual justification. Let us say that H is a skeptical alternative for subject S, to the proposition P, if H is inconsistent with P, but were it true, it would appear to S that P.

**Dogmatism:** For certain contents P, if it appears to S that P, and S has no reason to suspect that any skeptical alternative to P is true, then S is justified in believing P, regardless of whether she is independently justified in denying any skeptical alternative.

Dogmatists may disagree about which are the special contents to which their doctrine applies. Popular candidates involve observational concepts like this is red, and this is round. Pryor (2000) takes it to extend to this is a hand. I will continue to focus on this

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<sup>1</sup> The label originates with Pryor's (2000) subtle defense and application of the position. Views in the same spirit have been advanced by Alston (1986), Audi (1993), Burge (1993, 2003), Chisholm (1989), Ginet (1975), Peacocke (2004), Pollock (1974), and Pollock and Cruz (1999). Davies (2004) appears to be a recent convert. On some readings the view is implicit in Moore (1939). Some of the above state their thesis in terms of the reliability of our perceptual faculties, rather than the falsity of skeptical alternatives. I think my discussion should apply to this whole family of views.

example, as the differences in versions of dogmatism will not affect our discussion.<sup>2</sup> My main aim is to show that dogmatism is untenable: If I am not already justified in denying that I'm a handless brain-in-a-vat, or fake-handed, or the like, then when it appears to me that I have hands I will not thereby be justified in believing that I have hands. I will consider what might be said in favor of dogmatism before presenting my objections.

### 3. MOTIVATIONS FOR DOGMATISM

Dogmatism can seem attractive for at least two reasons. First, it appears to fit well with a pre-philosophical understanding of perceptual justification. Nothing fancy is required for me to tell that someone has hands. I just have to take a look, and there is a natural presumption in favor of taking the appearance at face value. If my justification for believing in hands does not require that I explicitly consider any justification for the denial of skeptical alternatives, it is not obvious why we should insist on such justification being available at all.

Second, it appears that unless we allow that some propositions can be perceptually justified without independent justification for the denial of skeptical alternatives, an infinite regress looms when we seek to establish that any perceptual belief is justified. I may have prior empirical support for denying that I have fake-hands. But we can always construct new skeptical hypotheses to potentially account for this evidence. And if we have further empirical evidence available against these new alternatives, we can produce further skeptical hypotheses to account for this evidence, and so on. The buck has to stop somewhere. And if we allow for a kind of unmediated perceptual justification at some point, why not allow it for my perception of hands?

### 4. INITIAL PROBLEMS FOR DOGMATISM

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<sup>2</sup> Further differences concern the epistemic attributes at issue, popular alternatives being justification, entitlement, and warrant (what philosophers mean by these terms also varies). I will follow Pryor (forthcoming) in using 'justification' as a broad term of epistemic appraisal which seems to include what others have called 'entitlement' and 'warrant'. The distinctions invoked by the new terminology may be important, but we can get by without them for the present discussion.

Before presenting my main objections to dogmatism, I will consider some worries that others have raised which I don't find so compelling as they stand. Let us set out the structure of the case more clearly.

Hand-1: It appears to me that this is a hand.

Hand-2: This is a hand.

Hand-3: This is not a fake-hand.

Let us stipulate that a fake-hand is not a hand, but cannot be visually distinguished from a hand. Examples of fake-hands include perfect plastic replicas of hands, and moving projected holograms of hands. According to dogmatism, Hand-1 is sufficient to justify belief in Hand-2, even if prior to this experience I lack justification for Hand-3.<sup>3</sup> But now once I am justified in believing Hand-2, I am surely also justified in believing Hand-3. For I can easily tell that if Hand-2 is true, then so is Hand-3.

I have made a familiar move here, appealing a kind of "closure" principle. The relevant principle is something like the following.

**Justification Closure:** If S is justified in believing P, and can tell that P entails Q, then other things being equal, S is justified in believing Q.

The principle is very hard to deny. Just suppose that it is false, and I am justified in believing P, but not Q, even though I realize that P entails Q. In this case I ought to put more confidence in the truth of P than in Q. But there is a certain kind of incoherence in such combination of attitudes. In being more confident of P than Q, I am leaving room for the possibility that P is true but not Q. But as P entails Q, I know that there is no such possibility to leave room for.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In saying that Hand-1 justifies Hand-2, dogmatists do not typically mean that one who holds a justified belief in Hand-1 is thereby justified in believing Hand-2. It is the truth of Hand-1 that does the justifying work. That is, it is by virtue of its appearing to me that this is a hand, that I'm justified in believing that it's a hand, regardless of whether I form a belief about how it appears to me.

<sup>4</sup> Note that this is consistent with a denial of closure of the provides evidence that relation, which is what I take to be the clearest lesson of Dretske's (1970) objection to Knowledge Closure. (The appearance as of a zebra provides evidence that it's a zebra, but this appearance does not provide evidence that it is not a mule with painted stripes). Justification Closure is also immune from Nozick's (1981) critique of Knowledge Closure. Nozick's argument depends on the closure-failure of the "tracking" condition which is said to be required for knowledge. Even if Nozick is right about knowledge, the tracking condition is

To return to our main argument, the dogmatist claims that Hand-1 is sufficient to give me justification for believing Hand-2, even if I initially lack justification for Hand-3. But then by Justification Closure I have justification for Hand-3 once I have justification for Hand-2. So the upshot is that I can gain justification for believing that this is not a fake-hand, for the first time, simply by its appearing to me to be a hand. This seems rather odd given that this is exactly how I should expect things to appear, if I had fake-hands instead of hands.

This does seem odd. But driving home its oddity takes some work. Here is one way we might try, based on suggestions by Cohen (2002). A friend waves to us with what appears to be a hand, so I take it that she has a hand. But you raise the worry: 'How can you tell it isn't a plastic toy that looks just like a hand?' I reply, "Well, I can tell that it's a hand because it looks like one. And it follows that it is not a mere plastic toy hand." My reply seems silly, but shouldn't this count as an appropriate response for a dogmatist?

Not necessarily. We should be careful to distinguish between the state of being justified in believing something, and the activity of justifying a belief. It is not obvious that a line of argument which would be dialectically inappropriate if offered as a defense of a belief, cannot capture the structure by which one's belief can attain the status of justification. Questions along the lines of "How can you tell that P" or "What makes you think that P" should usually be taken not simply as inquiries into your epistemic state, but as invitations to engage in rational persuasion. Such questions carry the implicature that the questioner seriously doubts that P, and presumably takes himself to be justified in his doubt. Now even the dogmatist grants that reasonable doubts concerning Hand-3, that is, reasons to suspect that our friend is fake-handed, tend to undermine the justification for Hand-2, that he has a hand. So even if I take myself to have no reason to suspect that our friend is fake-handed, I should not expect a doubter to be impressed by an argument which appeals to Hand-2, since by the doubter's lights, his experience as of a hand is insufficient to justify a belief in Hand-2. This explains why an appeal to an argument of the form Hand-1 through Hand-3 is

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not required for justification. This alleged knowledge-condition is motivated by reflection on Gettier-style (1963) examples whose very point is to show that we can have justified true belief without the further conditions required for knowledge.

dialectically inappropriate.<sup>5</sup> But this diagnosis has no obvious bearing on the question of whether someone who lacks reasons to suspect that it is a fake hand, might be justified in believing that it is not a fake-hand, by virtue of his experience which establishes that it is a hand.

A second way in which it can seem suspicious that having an experience as of a hand could result in me gaining justification for the belief that it is not a fake-hand is that it appears to involve an illicit kind of circularity. The hypotheses that I have fake-hands, or am a handless brain-in-a-vat, or the like, challenge the reliability of my perceptual experiences to accurately represent things. So in gaining justification for denying that these skeptical scenarios obtain, I gain some support for the reliability of my perceptual faculties. But there is something very fishy about using a method to support the reliability of that very method. We appear to be in the position of the tea-leaf reader whose tea-leaves tell her that tea-leaves are a reliable source of information.

I believe this worry is on the right track, but it is too quick as it stands. Complaints of circularity must be handled with care. There are plenty of legitimate lines of reasoning which might broadly be described as using a method to support the reliability of that method. I can read the optometrist's report from my eye exam and learn that my eye-sight is quite good. Doing well in a memory game can suggest that I have a good memory, even though I can't help but use my memory to evaluate my performance. To see whether the kind of circularity that dogmatism appears to support is illegitimate, we really need an account of just what kinds of circularity are vicious and why.

This is a surprisingly difficult matter. We can at least outline one clearly problematic kind of circularity. Suppose that in order for someone to rationally draw the conclusion of a certain argument, he must be justified in believing assumption A. But the only way that one can gain a justified belief in A involves having a justified belief in the argument's conclusion. Such an argument puts the reasoner in a Catch-22 situation. We can't meet the necessary condition of gaining justification for the conclusion without already being justified in believing it. Someone who came to believe the conclusion via such an argument would not thereby be justified.

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<sup>5</sup> Slightly different dialectical diagnoses are suggested by Markie (forthcoming) and Pyror (forthcoming). But see also Cohen (forthcoming) for an argument that our intuition that such reasoning is illegitimate can remain in cases where it cannot be so easily explained away by noting the dialectical context.

Is a transition from Hand-1 to Hand-2 to Hand-3 guilty of this kind of obviously illicit circularity? This all depends on whether independent justification for Hand-3 is necessary for Hand-1 to provide justification for Hand-2. That is, it depends precisely on whether dogmatism is true. For accusations of circularity to be compelling against dogmatism, we will need a more subtle account of circularity.

## 5. DOGMATISM AND DEGREES OF CONFIDENCE

It is time to start pushing what I take to be the more serious difficulties that dogmatism faces. Recall the initial worry. Dogmatism has the consequence that when it appears to me that there is a hand before me, I can gain justification, perhaps for the first time, for believing that it is not a fake-hand, that I am not a handless brain-in-a-vat, and so on. Now if I gain justification for a hypothesis, then my confidence in its truth should increase. But arguably when it appears to me that something is a hand, my confidence that it is not a fake-hand should decrease. For since this is just what a fake-hand would look like, the degree to which I suspect it is a fake-hand should increase.<sup>6</sup>

I will defend this last claim shortly, but first let us clear away one reason that we might doubt it. It is tempting to think as follows. Let us say that an experience E confirms H just in case it is rational to increase one's confidence in H upon having E.<sup>7</sup> Whether we are dogmatists or not, we must allow that its appearing that this is a hand confirms, to some degree at least, that it is a hand. Now if E confirms H and H entails H', then E confirms H'. If in response to an experience I become more confident of H, and the truth of H guarantees the truth of H', then this should boost my confidence in H' also. But now the experience described in Hand-1 confirms Hand-2, which entails Hand-3. So we have overall experiential confirmation of Hand-3.

The problem with this line of reasoning is that the tempting principle:

**Confirmation of Entailments:** If E confirms H which entails H', then E confirms H'.

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<sup>6</sup> My focus here is on dogmatism. But the difficulties raised here will in many cases also apply to reliabilist accounts of justification, and might be adapted against Williamson's (2000) account of perceptual knowledge. I will not pursue these extensions of the arguments here.

<sup>7</sup> Keep in mind that this is a stipulation, and I will always be using 'confirms' in this sense, whether or not it perfectly captures "ordinary usage," supposing there is such.

is false. To see why, let  $E^*$  be the proposition that it appears that  $P$ , where  $P$  is the content of the experience  $E$ . Let  $H = (E^* \ \& \ H')$ .  $E$  confirms  $H$ . For if it appears to me that  $P$ , then I can introspectively tell that it so appears, and this removes part of my uncertainty regarding the truth of  $H$ .  $H$  entails  $H'$ . So we have the absurd consequence that any experience confirms every proposition.<sup>8</sup>

It is in fact easy to construct cases where an experience confirms  $H$  while disconfirming a consequence of  $H$ . Suppose I put two black cards  $A$  and  $B$ , and a white card  $C$  in a hat and randomly select one. Let  $H$  be the hypothesis that  $B$  was selected, and  $H'$  be the hypothesis that either  $B$  or  $C$  was selected. Prior to seeing the selected card's color, your credence, or degree of belief in  $H$  should be  $1/3$  and in  $H'$  it should be  $2/3$ . Upon seeing that it is a black card your credence in both hypotheses should be  $1/2$ . For you now know that either  $A$  or  $B$  was selected, and it could just as easily be either one. And given that it is either  $A$  or  $B$ ,  $H'$  is true if and only if it is  $B$ , that is, if and only if  $H$  is true. So in response to your observation, you should boost your confidence in  $H$  while lowering it for  $H'$ , even though  $H$  entails  $H'$ .

The Hand-1 – Hand-3 case is arguably just like this. Certainly this is what a standard Bayesian account of confirmation entails.

$$P(\text{Hand-1} \mid \text{Hand-2}) \cong P(\text{Hand-1} \mid \text{not-Hand-3}) \cong 1$$

For we should expect something to look like a hand if it is either a hand or a fake that looks like a hand. Since we shouldn't in general expect to have experiences as of hands,

$$P(\text{Hand-1} \mid \text{Hand-2}) > P(\text{Hand-1})$$

$$P(\text{Hand-1} \mid \text{not-Hand-3}) > P(\text{Hand-1})$$

It follows from Bayes' Theorem that

$$P(\text{Hand-2} \mid \text{Hand-1}) > P(\text{Hand-2})$$

$$P(\text{not-Hand-3} \mid \text{Hand-1}) > P(\text{not-Hand-3}), \text{ and hence } P(\text{Hand-3} \mid \text{Hand-1}) < P(\text{Hand-3})$$

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<sup>8</sup> This argument is adapted from one by Hempel (1945).

Hand-1 raises the probability of Hand-2 while lowering the probability of Hand-3.<sup>9</sup> When it appears to me that this is a hand, then I can know that it so appears to me. That is, I can know Hand-1. If my degrees of belief should conform to the probability relations outlined above, I should increase my confidence in Hand-2, while decreasing it in Hand-3. And this is at odds with dogmatism which suggests that I might gain justification for Hand-3.<sup>10</sup>

We should note that this result in no way conflicts with Justification Closure. Indeed, Bayesianism supports this principle. For it is a theorem of the probability calculus that if H entails H', then  $P(H | E) \leq P(H' | E)$  for any E. So since Hand-2 entails Hand-3, I should be at least as confident in Hand-3 as I am in Hand-2, both before and after my experience as of a hand. Hence if I am justified in being confident that this is a hand, then I am justified in denying that it is a fake-hand.

The Bayesian account fits well with Crispin Wright's (2002) and Martin Davies' (2000) diagnosis of these kinds of cases, as involving a failure of transmission of justification, but no failure of closure. On this account, Justification Closure holds not because whatever justification that Hand-2 accrues is transmitted to Hand-3, but because justification for Hand-3 is a necessary precondition for Hand-2 gaining justification from my experience in the first place. In Bayesian terms, it is a probability theorem that  $P(\text{Hand-2} | \text{Hand-1})$  is inversely proportional to the product  $P(\text{Hand-1} | \text{not-Hand-3}) \times P(\text{not-Hand-3})$ . Since  $P(\text{Hand-1} | \text{not-Hand-3}) \cong 1$ , how high  $P(\text{Hand-2} | \text{Hand-1})$  is directly depends on how high  $P(\text{Hand-3})$  is. Indeed, as we've noted,  $P(\text{Hand-2} | \text{Hand-1}) \leq P(\text{Hand-3} | \text{Hand-1})$ , and  $P(\text{Hand-3} | \text{Hand-1}) < P(\text{Hand-3})$ . Hence,  $P(\text{Hand-2} | \text{Hand-1}) < P(\text{Hand-3})$ . So its appearing to me that this is hand can render me justifiably confident that it is a hand, only if I am already confident that it is not a fake-hand.

Some who are either unfamiliar with or dubious of Bayesianism might not feel the force of these considerations, so I will address one worry and strengthen the case in other ways. On the standard Bayesian model, updating of one's degrees of belief should

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<sup>9</sup> The same kind of probability result has also been noted by Cohen (forthcoming) and Hawthorne (2004).

<sup>10</sup> The relation between outright belief and degrees of belief is controversial. For example, in responding to a different objection to dogmatism by Schiffer (forthcoming), Peacocke (2004) denies that one's outright views (or lack of them) can be identified with any degree of belief. So we should note that my objection to

occur when you become certain of some evidential proposition  $E$ , at which point you should set your degree of belief in  $H$  to the conditional probability  $P(H|E)$ . In fitting the hands case to this model, I was supposing that when it appears that I have a hand, I learn that it appears that I have a hand, and I should update my degrees of confidence accordingly.

Now many will quite rightly complain that this simple Bayesian model gives an unrealistic picture of how belief change does and should occur in response to experience. When it appears to me that this is a hand, I needn't even consider the fact that it so appears to me. I just come to believe that it is a hand. There is really no need for this middle-man, a belief about the content of my experience. On the dogmatist view, there is the experience, and what I learn directly from it is something about the world, not just about my experience. An account of how my beliefs should be adjusted, the dogmatist might insist, should be put directly in terms of my learning that this is a hand, not some belief about how things appear to me. Suppose that prior to looking at the end of my arm, my degrees of belief in Hand-2 and Hand-3, were 0.5 and 0.55 respectively. My experience as of a hand might directly boost my confidence in Hand-2 up to 0.9. And since I should be at least as confident of Hand-3 as I am of Hand-2, my confidence in Hand-3 should get pushed up to, say, 0.95. This might seem like a natural story once we leave out the intermediate belief in Hand-1.

I am sympathetic to the view that we do not and need not form beliefs about how things appear to us in order to form justified beliefs about how the world is. But I don't think that this can really alter the force of the Bayesian considerations. For I certainly can, if I choose to consider the matter, form the firm belief that it appears that this is a hand when it does so appear to me. And in this case the Bayesian argument goes through and seems unavoidable. But now it surely should not make any significant difference whether I choose to consider how things appear to me, and form the belief that this appears to be a hand, or I don't consider the matter. If the rational response to its appearing that this is a hand, when I also believe that it appears that this is a hand, is to decrease my confidence that it is a fake-hand, then surely this is the rational response to the same experience when I do not even consider how things appear to me.

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dogmatism requires only the minimal assumption: If one gains justification for an outright belief in  $P$ , then it is not the case that one's degree in belief in  $P$ , insofar as one has one, should decrease.

It was on very modest Bayesian assumptions that we drew the conclusion that my credence in Hand-3 should decrease in response to an experience as of a hand. I will try to bolster these considerations in two ways. First, I invite the dogmatist to engage in an experiment based on the three-card game discussed above (it is a little risky, but well worth it for the philosophical enlightenment). You are put to sleep while I write on the cards the following instructions.

Card A: Chop off his hands and replace them with fake ones.

Card B: Leave his hands alone.

Card C: Chop off his hands and leave the stumps.

I will randomly pick a card and follow the instructions. When you awake with your arms still under the sheets, you are to consider how likely it is that you do not have fake-hands. As with the original card case, it seems obvious that your credence should be  $2/3$  (you are still numb from the anesthetic so you can't feel them or use them yet.) When you lift your arms, let's say there appear to be hands on the end of them. You now know that Card C was not picked, but it could just as easily have been A as B. So your credence that you are not fake-handed should drop to  $1/2$ .

We can, if you like, make the story more like the real case by changing the numbers of cards. We might put many Card Bs, fewer Card Cs and even fewer Card As in the hat. While this will change the numbers, the general result will be the same: Your credence in Hand-3 should drop, not increase. The challenge for the dogmatist is to explain why, if this is the correct result in this contrived case, it is not the same in an ordinary case. The only apparent difference between the card game and an ordinary case of judging whether someone has a hand is the following. How we ought to distribute out credence among the possibilities seems more straightforward in the card game. If there are three cards in the hat, symmetry considerations suggest that our credence should be divided evenly among the hypotheses that I have a hand, that I have a fake hand, and that I have neither. In a regular case it is not so clear what the relative plausibility of these hypotheses is. But this does not appear to make any difference to how our convictions should be altered in the light of experience.

Now for the second way of bolstering the probabilistic considerations. There certainly are a number of people in the world who are missing at least one hand. And

no doubt there are a few of these who have put on plastic hand replicas which are realistic enough that we couldn't tell them from genuine hands if they waved to us. Let  $p$  be the total number of people in the world,  $f$  be the number of people with fake hands, and  $h$  be the number of people who have hands. Suppose we somehow learn the values of these numbers. A woman walks by with her hands in her coat pockets. There is nothing about her to suggest one way or the other whether she has hands or fake-hands or just stumps. All we have to go on in judging what she has on her arms are the general statistics of the population. At this point surely our credence that she is not fake-handed should be  $1 - f/p$ . Now she waves to us with what appears to be a hand. We now know that she doesn't just have stumps, and so has either hands or fake-hands. Our credence that she is not fake-handed should now be  $1 - f/(f+h)$ . But since not everyone has either hands or fake-hands,  $f+h < p$ , and hence  $[1 - f/(f+h)] < [1 - f/p]$ . Once again we see that our credence that she is not fake-handed should decrease when she appears to have hands. If this is the appropriate response to the experience when we happen to know these statistics, I can't see why it should be any different in an ordinary case. Our judgments should be governed largely by our best estimates of these statistics, and we know that whatever the values of  $p$ ,  $f$ , and  $h$ ,  $[1 - f/(f+h)] < [1 - f/p]$ .

## 6. JUSTIFICATION AND FUTURE JUSTIFICATION

For the next objection to dogmatism, I want to focus on a modified version of Hand-3.

Hand-3\*: This is not a super-fake-hand

A super-fake-hand is a non-hand which not only looks just like a hand, but has magical powers that prevent observers from gaining independent evidence that it is not really a hand. For instance it disables people from spreading rumors that it is not a real hand. It prevents anyone from gaining access to the owner's medical records to learn that he once lost a hand. A super-fake-hand not only eliminates all evidence of super-fake-hands, but of all other related skeptical hypotheses too. For instance it prevents people from acquiring any reason to suspect that there are hand-image inducing demons about. If you purchase a super-fake-hand, you can rest assured that at least no one will justifiably suspect that you falsely appear to have a hand.

G. E. Moore (1939) stands at the podium, announcing that he will succeed, where Kant failed, to prove the existence of things outside of us. We're not sure yet if he has hands (the rumor is that a zealous Kantian hacked them off, infuriated by Moore's question-begging "proof"). But we have no reason to suppose that he will falsely appear to have hands when raises his arms. Let us further stipulate that we are not justified in denying that he is super-fake-handed. That is, we are not justified in believing Hand-3\*. He hasn't raised his arms yet, but we are sure that he will toward the end of the lecture, and we will be watching. Prior to viewing his arm-ends we can contemplate how things might appear to us when we do. Either he will appear to have hands or he won't. If he does, then either we will also have some reason to suspect that we are hallucinating that it is a hand, or that it is a fake hand, or the like, or we won't. So the following three scenarios exhaust the possibilities of how Moore's arms will appear to us.

A: He will not appear to have hands.

B: He will appear to have hands, but we will have some reason to suspect that this appearance is deceptive.

C: He will appear to have hands, and we will have no reason to suspect that this appearance is deceptive.

Now suppose A obtains. We will clearly be justified in believing that he is not super-fake-handed, as he doesn't even appear to have a hand. If B obtains then we will likewise be justified in denying that he has a super-fake-hand. For we know that if he did, we would not have obtained any evidence that we were subject to an illusion. If C obtains, then according to dogmatism, we will be justified in believing that it is a hand on the end of his arm, and hence in turn that it is not a super-fake-hand. So we know in advance, if we know dogmatism to be correct, that no matter how things may appear to us when we see what is in his coat pocket, we will be justified in believing Hand-3\*. But if we are now justified in believing that we will soon be justified in believing Hand-3\*, then surely we are already justified in believing it. We shouldn't have to wait around to gain this new justification that we know is coming our way, in order to justifiably go ahead and believe it.

In this last move, I am appealing to a principle that I have heard captured in the slogan 'evidence of evidence is evidence.' The rough principle is

**Meta-justification Principle:** If S is justified in believing that he will be justified in believing P, then he is already justified in believing P.<sup>11</sup>

To illustrate it with different case, suppose that you haven't seen my bike, but you ask an oracle what color it will appear when you see it. The oracle explains that it will appear blue, and that the conditions for your being justified in believing that it is blue will be met when you see it. What color should you now think the bike is? Surely you are entirely justified in thinking that it's blue.

There are, as always, tricky exceptions to the rough principle. The oracle might explain that the bike will falsely appear blue to you but that you will be justified in believing that it is blue, for you will have forgotten that the oracle told you this. In this case, of course, you should not already believe that it is blue. A careful formulation of the principle will have to accommodate such cases. We might add the condition that there is no proposition Q such that S is now justified in believing Q, and if S were justified in believing Q at those times at which she is actually justified in believing P, then she would not be justified in believing P at those times. Perhaps there would still be tricky exceptions. But I think it is clear enough that the case that concerns us does not involve any tricky business like this.

We can briefly sketch the motivation for this principle. Justification is a kind of guide to the truth. We seek to form justified beliefs as a means to forming true beliefs. This is why a rational inquirer is sensitive to questions of justificatory status in forming his beliefs. In a serious inquiry as to whether P, we ask ourselves whether we would be justified in believing P. An affirmative answer should serve to boost our conviction in P, while a negative answer should undermine it. Justification can play this role only on the assumption that justified beliefs tend to be true, so that it is not typical to be fully justified in believing something false. If we were very often justified in believing what is false, it would be of little help in our pursuit of truth to believe only what we are justified in believing. Hence the fact that I will be justified in believing P, counts as a reason to suppose that it is true (unless this reason is undermined, as in the case

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<sup>11</sup> The principle is in a similar spirit to van Fraassen's (1984) Reflection Principle, but not to be confused with it. Adam Elga brought to my attention that Hawthorne (2004) notes a similar conflict between Williamson's (2000) account of knowledge and van Fraassen's principle.

immediately above where I have reason to believe that this particular future justification will be in something false). And this can constitute a justification now for believing P.<sup>12</sup>

So to sum up the problem for dogmatism. We began with the stipulation that while we had no particular reason to suspect that Moore falsely appeared to have hands, we were not justified in believing Hand-3\*. But assuming that we are justified in believing dogmatism, then we are justified in believing that we will be justified in believing Hand-3\*, however things appear when Moore raises his arms. But if this is so then we are already justified in believing Hand-3\*. But this contradicts our stipulation. Therefore we are not justified in believing dogmatism. Dogmatism is an a priori philosophical thesis. If it were true, we would be justified in believing it. Hence it is false.

Let's pause to consider this argument more carefully. We began with the stipulation that while we are not justified in believing Hand-3\*, we have no reason to suspect that it or any other skeptical alternative is true. Assuming that we are justified in believing dogmatism, we concluded that we are already justified in believing Hand-3\*. Let's be clear that this prior justification for Hand-3\* that is available to us (assuming dogmatism) is independent of any experience as of Moore's hands, in the sense that its availability does require us to actually have such an experience, even in the future. For the application of the Meta-justification Principle, it is enough that we are justified in believing that Moore will soon raise his arms. (A trustworthy source tells us that Moore ends his presentation that way. But as it happens Moore has changed his act. Having failed to impress doubters with his hand waving, he will now stand on his head and flip his feet in the air.) Indeed the argument does not seem even to require a belief that we will see the ends of Moore's arms. If I were to learn that I will have a fatal heart attack before the lecture ends, this should not really affect the case. We could appeal to a hypothetical version of the principle. Even if we don't get to see Moore's arms, if we were to see them, either A, B, or C would obtain, and in any case we would be justified in believing Hand-3\*. But if we would be so justified were we to look, then surely we are justified. (Compare: You will never get to see my bike, but if you were to see it, you would be justified in believing that it is blue. What color should you think it is?)

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<sup>12</sup> Understood this way, the principle does not have essentially to do with calibrating one's own predicted future credence with one's current credence, as in van Fraassen's Reflection Principle. If I am justified in

Consider now a possible line of resistance for the dogmatist. Say that a skeptical alternative H has Intermediate Epistemic Status (IE-status) for me if I have no reason to suspect that it or any other skeptical alternative is true, but I am not justified in outright denying it. Dogmatism entails that skeptical alternatives with IE-status for me pose no threat to perceptual justification. Now in the current objection to dogmatism, it was stipulated that Hand-3\* has IE-status for me, from which, with the assumption of dogmatism, we derived the contrary conclusion that I have justification for Hand-3\*. A dogmatist could resist this conclusion by insisting that I have made an impossible stipulation, that in fact Hand-3\* cannot have IE-status for me. That is, one is automatically justified in denying that Moore is super-fake-handed, provided we have no reason to suspect that he falsely appears to have hands, regardless of whether we have viewed his arms. So there is strictly no conflict here with dogmatism.

But now it is very hard to see how Hand-3 could have IE-status if Hand-3\* cannot. Let's suppose that I have no reason to suspect that any skeptical alternative to Hand-2 is true. According to the dogmatist's current response, it follows that I am justified in denying that Moore has super-fake hands. But if such justification for Hand-3\* is so easy to come by, why can't I also have it for Hand-3?

We can run a similar argument for Hand-3, by setting the case up a little differently. Suppose this time that we are justified in believing that no evidence will emerge to suggest that Moore falsely appears to have hands. He is just about to present his famous proof. The audience is respectfully quiet and focused on the podium. We are certainly not seeking out evidence of hand illusions. It is not that we can confidently rule out that Moore falsely appears to have hands, it is just that there is very little opportunity for evidence of hand illusions to present itself to us. In this case we are entitled to assume that when Moore raises his arms, either scenario A or C will obtain. According to dogmatism, in either case we will be justified in believing Hand-3. So given a justified belief in dogmatism, we are justified in believing Hand-3 already.

Now if we reflect on this case, it seems clear that the availability of this justification for Hand-3 could not really depend on our justification for expecting not to obtain any evidence that Moore falsely appears to have a hand. Our reason for expecting no such evidence to show up was just that there was no opportunity for us to obtain it, whether

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believing that you are justified in believing P, this is some reason for me to believe P, and given other

such evidence is available or not. This does not amount to evidence that Moore is not fake-handed. So if we grant that we have justification for Hand-3 in the case as described, we must admit that we would also have it without justifiably ruling out our obtaining evidence of misleading hand-appearances.

The upshot is that dogmatism has the apparent consequence that no skeptical alternative to Hand-2 can have IE-status for us. If we have no reason to suspect that any skeptical alternative to Hand-2 is true, then independently of a Hand-1 experience, we are justified in denying all skeptical alternatives. We should note that if we are right here, we have not strictly shown that dogmatism is inconsistent. For this consequence is compatible with dogmatism as stated. Dogmatism entails only that even if skeptical alternatives to Hand-2 have IE-status for you, then Hand-1 provides sufficient justification for Hand-2. A dogmatist could consistently deny that that the antecedent of this conditional can be satisfied.

But this surely violates the spirit of dogmatism, as on this assumption, dogmatism would be at best trivially correct. It would be analogous to me telling a student, “Don’t worry about whether you will pass the exam. As long as you get at least 57% on the exam, then even if you fail it, you will still pass the course,” but I also maintain that 57% is a passing grade for the exam. It is at least implicit in the dogmatist position that skeptical alternatives can have IE-status for us.<sup>13</sup> This is what is supposed to give dogmatism its anti-skeptical punch. Rightly or wrongly, we can be tempted into thinking that while I have no reason to suspect that, say, I’m a handless brain-in-a-vat being fed experiences as of hands, I am not a priori justified in outright denying that this is the case. Rather than rejecting this skeptical intuition, the dogmatist claims that even if we grant that the brain in a vat hypothesis has IE-status for me prior to experience, skepticism does not follow. For I am still justified in believing that I have hands simply because it appears to me that I do. If my critique of dogmatism is correct, we are forced to reject this skeptical intuition in order to avoid skepticism.<sup>14</sup>

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conditions I might thereby be justified in believing P myself.

<sup>13</sup> It is explicit in those such as Davies (2004), Peacocke (2004), and Pryor (2004) who appeal to dogmatism in a partial defense of Moore’s (1939) argument. Other opponents of dogmatism such as Schiffer (forthcoming) take it to be a component of the dogmatist position.

<sup>14</sup> As Nico Silins has suggested to me, there may still be room for something somewhat in the spirit of dogmatism as I’ve stated it, by insisting that in an important sense it is not in virtue of my justification for denying skeptical alternatives that its appearing that P provides justification for believing that P.

## 7. BOOTSTRAPPING

The final objection to dogmatism that I will consider was put forward by Cohen (2002), drawing on suggestions by Fumerton (1985) and Vogel (2000). My purpose will be to bolster this objection by showing the inadequacy of an initially very plausible response. I insisted above that accusations of circularity need to be made with care. But there are some kinds of circular reasoning such as the following that are just obviously foolish. A series of colored cards are presented to me. Viewing each card, I judge what color it is by its appearance, and then note by introspection that it appears to be that very color: "That one is red, and it appears red, that one is blue and it appears blue..." I thereby take myself to have amassed a large body of inductive evidence that things tend to appear to me as they are in color, that is, that my color-vision is reliable. Call this kind of procedure "bootstrapping." It is obviously silly. A test of this sort provides no evidence at all for the reliability of my color-vision.<sup>15</sup> The case is very different if the color of each card is announced as the card is displayed. Now I can check how the cards appear to me against the reported color, which I know to be accurate. A strong run of successes in this kind of test certainly does support the reliability of my color-vision.

The trouble for dogmatism is that it appears to endorse the bootstrapping procedure. According to dogmatism, I am justified in believing that a card is red if it appears red, even if I am not justified in believing that my color-vision is reliable. All that is required is that I have no reason suspect that it isn't reliable. So by bootstrapping I really can collect a large body of inductive evidence that things are generally the color that they appear to me to be. And if I do gain this inductive evidence, then surely it should support the reliability of my color vision. So dogmatism appears to be committed to this absurd conclusion.

I think that this objection is ultimately a serious one. But as it stands it is a far too quick. It is a hard won lesson of confirmation theory that a widespread correlation doesn't always form the basis of a good inductive argument.<sup>16</sup> There are all kinds of

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<sup>15</sup> There is actually a complication here, as Pryor notes. The cards might appear to be undulating in color, which I know cannot really be the case. This outcome would be evidence that my color vision is unreliable. So their appearing stable in color provides at least some support for the reliability of my color vision. I suggest that we ignore this complication by assuming that we know for certain that the cards will not appear undulating in color, or anything of that sort.

<sup>16</sup> The literature stemming from Hempel's (1945) Raven Paradox, and Goodman's (1955) grue puzzle, among others, have taught us this.

ways that an inductive argument can go wrong, so we shouldn't be too quick to assign the problem with bootstrapping to dogmatism.

To assess and then strengthen the bootstrapping objection to dogmatism, it will be instructive to examine Pryor's initially plausible response.<sup>17</sup> Pryor's strategy is to try to diagnose the problem with bootstrapping in a way that is consistent with dogmatism. He implicitly appeals to principle which we could state as follows.

**Disconfirmability:** If we know that a certain test cannot yield disconfirmation of our hypothesis, then no result of the test can confirm the hypothesis either.

The principle appears very plausible, and neatly distinguishes the two versions of the color vision test. In the bootstrapping version, where I simply take the color-appearances as an indication of their color, and note that this matches their appearance, there is no way that the results will disconfirm the hypothesis that things generally appear to me the color that they are. No matter what color the cards appear, I will judge by this method that they are as they appear. In the second version of the test I match my color-experiences against the reported colors for each card. It is quite possible for me to discover a discrepancy by this method, which would disconfirm the reliability of my color-vision.

Pryor illustrates the application of this principle with a further instructive example. I am trying to measure my reliability at gauging water temperature by testing my judgments against the results of an accurate thermometer. On some trials of this test I clumsily drop the thermometer and so do not read it for that trial. Now I discover that I have a neurological condition such that whenever I am about to misgauge the water temperature, I drop the thermometer (not all of my fumbings are caused by this condition, so I can't infer from them that I am misgauging the temperature). I now know that this test cannot reveal any inaccuracy in my temperature judgments. Consequently, by Disconfirmability, the test's results cannot confirm the reliability of my temperature judgments.

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<sup>17</sup> The response is found in Pryor's unpublished (2001). Pryor has recently come to have doubts about this response, and has dropped the discussion of bootstrapping from his (forthcoming). The original paper remains available online as others have cited it in print. The initial response has sufficient plausibility and has impressed enough readers that I think it deserves careful attention.

In this case the problem with the test has nothing to do with our not knowing that we have reliable access to the actual temperature against which to test my own judgments. I do know that I have such access. The diagnosis of the problem need only appeal to Disconfirmability. So it is open to the dogmatist to deny, as Pryor does, that he is committed to the legitimacy of bootstrapping, by insisting that even though in the color-card test I form many justified beliefs of the form: this card appears to be colored C and it is C, these data do not provide inductive support for the reliability of my color-vision since the test cannot possibly disconfirm the reliability of my color-vision.

To explain why I find this response ultimately unsatisfactory, I will begin with my own diagnosis of the temperature gauging case. First consider the more straightforward case in which I am not clumsy and know that I do not suffer from the neurological condition linking temperature misjudgment and clumsiness. In this case I could very easily discover a discrepancy between my judgments and the accurate thermometer readings. I run a series of trials of this test and find that I gauge the temperature accurately each time. Why does this confirm that my temperature judgments are reliable? The fact that I have correctly gauged the temperature on every occasion during the test calls for some kind of explanation. If I were not a reliable judge of temperature, it would be a remarkable coincidence that not once did I misgauge the temperature in this long series of trials. There appears to be no plausible explanation for my success without supposing that there is a reliable connection between temperature and my temperature judgments. So my ability to reliably gauge temperature is confirmed.

In the case that Pryor describes, I do not have the datum that I have accurately gauged the temperature on each occasion in the test. Since I have dropped the thermometer several times, for all I know, I may have sometimes misgauged the temperature. All I know is just the weaker fact that I have failed to discover that I have misgauged the temperature. But this fact is adequately explained by my neurological condition which prevents me from reading the thermometer whenever I misgauge the temperature. Given this fact, I should not expect to discover any errors in my temperature judgments, regardless of how reliable these judgments generally are. Since in this case I learn no fact that the reliability of my temperature judgments would help explain, I gain no evidence for this reliability.

Now consider the bootstrapping color-vision test. Having viewed a number of cards, I know that I have failed to discover an instance in which I misjudged a card's

color. This fact can be explained without appeal to the reliability of my color-vision. Regardless of how reliable my color-vision is, it is impossible to discover that appearances don't match reality when my only guides to reality are those very appearances. But according to the dogmatist, by running this test I do learn another important fact, namely

**No Errors:** My color experiences have matched the actual color of each of the many cards that I have viewed.

For this proposition is entailed by one of the form:

**Track Record:** This card appears to be C in color, and it is C, this one appears C' and it is C', ..., and these are all the cards that I have viewed.

And according to the dogmatist, I am justified in believing this latter proposition, even if I lack justification for the reliability of my color-vision. Now if indeed I do know that my color-vision has been accurate on all of the many occasions that I have used it in this test, then no matter how I may have come to know this, it surely supports the reliability of my color-vision. For what else could account for my long run of successful color judgments if not the reliability of my color-vision? It would be quite incredible for unreliable faculties to accidentally give the right results every time! It would be like someone guessing the outcome of a roll of dice many, many times in a row. We would have to suspect that there was something more going on to account for his success. As there is no other plausible explanation available in this case for my success at judging colors, I must gain some support for the reliability of my color-vision. So the dogmatist cannot avoid the conclusion that bootstrapping can provide me with evidence that my color-vision is reliable.

Of what relevance then is Disconfirmability? I admitted previously that the principle seems plausible and gives the right verdicts on the cases we are considering. And it is by this principle that Pryor tries to diagnose the problem with bootstrapping without impugning dogmatism. It will pay us to consider why this principle seems correct. First, let's note that if some, but not all possible test-outcomes confirm the hypothesis H, then at least some possible outcomes disconfirm H. For suppose this were not so, that some

possible outcomes of test T are confirming but the rest are neutral with respect to H. If we were to obtain a non-confirming outcome, we could reason as follows. This test can produce either confirming or neutral outcomes. It is more to be expected that we will obtain confirming evidence for H if H is true than if it is false. So our failure to obtain confirming evidence for H from test T, is at least some reason to suppose that H is false. This contradicts our hypothesis that no non-confirming outcome of T is disconfirming.<sup>18</sup>

So then the only way left for a test to be possibly confirming but not possibly disconfirming of H, is for all possible outcomes of the test to be confirming. But if such a test really were possible, then surely we should not have to actually run the test in order to reap the benefits of its confirmation of H. If I know that a test is going to deliver evidence supporting H, then I can skip the test and just boost my confidence in H. But this would just go to show that running the test is of no relevance all to H.

This captures what seems so obviously foolish about bootstrapping. If performing such a test really could provide evidence for the reliability of my color-vision, then it should do so no matter how the various cards appear to me. But if this is so, then surely I shouldn't have to waste my time performing the test. I could simply reason that no matter how the test turns out, I will be justified in believing that my color-vision has been accurate on each use, which in turn confirms that my color vision is reliable. But if I know that the outcome of this test will render me justified in this estimation of the reliability of my color-vision, then surely I can go ahead and draw this conclusion already. But this can only show that the test is of no relevance at all concerning the reliability of my color-vision.

Ironically, Disconfirmability, which Pryor appealed to, reveals the problem with bootstrapping while also conflicting with dogmatism. The bootstrapping inference goes in three steps. By looking at a number of cards and matching their colors to their appearances I take myself to have established something of the form

- I. **Track Record:** This card appears to be C in color, and it is C, this one appears C' and it is C',..., and these are all the cards that I have viewed.

From this I can deductively infer

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<sup>18</sup> Thanks to Matt Kotzen for a noting a serious error in a draft of this argument.

- II. **No Errors:** My color-experiences have matched the actual color of each of the many cards that I have viewed.

From this I make the explanatory-inductive inference to

- III. **Reliability:** My color-vision is reliable.

Disconfirmability entails that we cannot get as far as Step II. No matter how the cards appear to me, if I am justified on each viewing in believing that the card is the color that it appears, then I can be justified in believing that I correctly judged the color of each card. In other words, if any test outcome confirms No Errors, then all possible test outcomes confirm this. But according to the Disconfirmability Principle, it follows that the test does nothing to confirm No Errors. Either I was already justified in believing No Errors, or I was not and I remain unjustified after the test.

Now Pryor's strategy was to deny that dogmatism is committed to the claim that this test confirms my color vision reliability, by blocking the inference by the Disconfirmability Principle. But the dogmatist is committed to saying that the test confirms No Errors. For the dogmatist insists that I needn't be justified in believing that my color-vision is reliable in order to be justified in believing that a card is red, when it appears red, or green when it appears green, and so on. He insists, for instance, that I needn't be justified in believing that no demon will make me hallucinate that a blue card is red, in order for me to be justified in believing that it is red when it appears so. The dogmatist is committed to claiming that by running the test I can gain justification for some Track Record proposition, no matter how the test turns out. And since any such proposition entails No Errors, I must also gain justification for No Errors. But this is a violation of Disconfirmability. Far from allowing the dogmatist to consistently denounce bootstrapping, this principle only strengthens the case against dogmatism.

## 8. IS BOOTSTRAPPING EVERYONE'S PROBLEM?

A suspicion may arise that the bootstrapping objection against dogmatism "proves too much." For it might seem that we can reach the untenable conclusion—that the

bootstrapping test confirms the reliability of one's own faculties—without assuming dogmatism.<sup>19</sup> Let's suppose that I am not entirely justified in taking my color-vision to be reliable. On any reasonable view, dogmatic or not, a card's appearing color C will still provide at least some evidence that it is C.<sup>20</sup> So by running the color-vision test, I will be given some reason to believe that, say, this card appears red and it is red, this one appears green, and it is green..., even if I am not fully justified in believing it. But if I have gained some evidence of having made a long string of successful color judgments (with no apparent misjudgments) this would appear to provide some inductive evidence for the reliability of my color-vision.

The situation might be compared to the following. We don't know whether Jane's color-vision is reliable, but we hear a rumor that she received a perfect score on a color-vision test, correctly judging the color of each of a number of cards. The rumor is not substantial enough to justify such a belief in her performance, but it does lend support to it. Surely in such a case we should increase our estimate of her reliability by some degree. Similarly, if I gain even a little evidence that I have performed similarly well in my own color-judgments, then I should increase my estimate of my own reliability. Indeed, since this in turn should lead me to increase my confidence in my future color judgments, as I continue to run the test I will gain even stronger evidence of my reliability. Starting from doubt, I can pull myself up by my bootstraps to full rational confidence in the reliability of my faculties!

But this cannot be right. Other things being equal, the bootstrapping procedure obviously provides no evidence whatsoever that my color-vision is reliable. Yet we have reached this absurd conclusion given only the sensible, non-dogmatic assumption that a series of color-experiences provide some evidence for a Track Record proposition, even if we are not justified in believing our color-vision to be reliable. Bootstrapping appears to be everyone's problem. Even if Pryor's diagnosis is unsuccessful, there must be something wrong with the line of reasoning above. And whatever it is should get the dogmatist off the hook also.

In addressing this worry, we must attend to the distinction between a specific Track Record proposition which lists the colors of each card and their matching appearances,

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<sup>19</sup> Worries along these lines were suggested by Greg Epstein, Matt Kotzen, and Nico Silins.

and the weaker No Errors claim that of the many cards I've viewed, each has been the color that it appeared (this is equivalent to the claim that some Track Record proposition is true). Now only the dogmatist, I claim, is committed to No Errors being confirmed by the bootstrapping test, even if I am not justified in taking my color-vision to be reliable. For suppose that prior to the test, I am not justified in denying that I will shortly have several non-veridical color-hallucinations (but I have no reason to suspect that I will). Since this skeptical hypothesis is incompatible with No Errors, it follows by Justification Closure that I am not justified in believing No Errors. But now according to the dogmatist, upon viewing the cards I am now justified in believing a particular Track Record proposition. Since any such proposition entails No Errors, it follows by Justification Closure again that I am now justified in believing No Errors. So according to dogmatism, by viewing some colored cards I have confirmed that my color-experiences were veridical on each occasion. We've noted two problems with this. First, it violates the Disconfirmability Principle. And second, it seems unavoidable that confirmation of No Errors lends further support to the reliability of my color-vision.

Fortunately, the non-dogmatist is free to deny that a viewing of colored cards confirms No Errors at all, so he is not saddled with these embarrassing consequences. My experience E of running the color-vision test consists of a series of color-appearances. We can certainly grant that any such experience confirms some Track Record proposition TR.<sup>21</sup> And any such proposition entails No Errors. But as we noted in Section 5, it is a fallacy to suppose that because E confirms TR, which entails No Errors, E thereby confirms No Errors. An experience need not confirm the consequences of what it confirms. Indeed, quite apart from worries about bootstrapping and the Disconfirmability Principle, we should want to deny that E confirms No Errors. The assumption that my color-experiences will be veridical suggests nothing about which particular color-experiences I should expect to have (unless I happen already to have information about which colors the cards are likely to be).  $P(E \mid \text{No Errors}) = P(E)$ , and hence by Bayes Theorem,  $P(\text{No Errors} \mid E) = P(\text{No Errors})$ . The experience I have running the color-vision test is irrelevant to No Errors. This is the crucial point of

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<sup>20</sup> This actually depends on the severity of my doubts concerning reliability. For instance if it is highly likely that cards will appear C only if they are not C, then a C-appearance will count against something's being C. But this does not affect the force of the present argument.

difference in the third-person case of Jane's color-vision. In that case our evidence was not a series of color-appearances, but our receiving a rumor that Jane performed well on a color-vision test. We are somewhat more likely to hear such a rumor if she made no errors in her color judgments, than if she didn't. Note that for the non-dogmatist, there is no conflict here with Justification Closure. For he will insist that my prior rational confidence that my senses will not deceive me should govern the degree to which E confirms its corresponding Track Record proposition. It is only if I have justification for No Errors available independently of experience E, that E is guaranteed to justify a Track Record proposition.<sup>22</sup>

Now since, other things being equal, the bootstrapping test does not confirm No Errors, it won't confirm Reliability either. For there is no direct route of confirmation from either E or a Track Record proposition to Reliability. The reliability of my color-vision can only explain the match between appearances and colors (No Errors). It does nothing to explain or raise the likelihood of any particular appearances, or colors. Bootstrapping is only a problem for dogmatists.

## 9. DOGMATISM OR JUSTIFICATION BY DEFAULT?

Things don't look good for dogmatism. It is worth stepping back and considering why we found it attractive in the first place, and whether we can gain its advantages in another way. The two motivations for dogmatism were avoidance of implausible skepticism, and a natural fit with a pre-philosophical understanding of perceptual justification. Suppose that we abandon dogmatism, and insist that in order to gain perceptual justification for believing that P, we must have independent justification for believing that we are not victims of a visual illusion that P. We could nevertheless insist that we have a kind of default justification for assuming the general reliability of our

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<sup>21</sup> This doesn't even depend on what I judge to be the reliability of my color-vision. An experience as of colors C, C', ... will confirm the Track Record proposition: this appears C and it is C, this appears C' and it is C', .... For the latter entails that the cards appear C, C', ....

<sup>22</sup> There are complications here. Suppose an oracle reveals to me that the cards will not falsely appear in the sequence: blue, orange, green, brown, slate, but may very well falsely appear other colors. Now I am not justified in believing No Errors. But if the cards do appear blue, orange, green, brown, slate, then I can be sure that they are these colors, and hence that No Errors is true. But in this quirky case the confirmation of No Errors does not seem to extend to Reliability. And in any event, it is not surprising that given peculiar background information, the bootstrapping test might confirm the reliability of my color-vision. The problem for dogmatism is that it supports bootstrapping even in regular cases.

perceptual faculties. We are entitled to believe that our faculties tend to deliver the truth unless we have some positive reason to doubt this. Our faculties are generally reliable only if skeptical alternatives rarely obtain. So if I'm justified in taking my faculties to be reliable, then I need give very little credence to skeptical hypotheses (unless of course I have reason to suspect that one obtains). On the view that I'm sketching I do not need to explicitly believe in the reliability of my faculties or the falsity of skeptical alternatives in order to gain justification from perceptual experience, but justification for this reliability is available to me nevertheless.<sup>23</sup> The regress leading to skepticism is now blocked, for it is denied that the justification for ruling out skeptical alternatives requires some prior empirical ground. This justification is available a priori by default. I am justified in my perceptually based beliefs, according to this view, in just the circumstances that the dogmatist claims that I am. Such a view seems to have all of the advantages of dogmatism but avoids all of my objections. No doubt the view requires closer examination and development. But if we are attracted to something in the ball park of dogmatism, it seems to be the right place to look.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Reid (2002 [1785]) seems to endorse a view along these lines, although perhaps not consistently (see Alston (1985)). A sophisticated account of a kind of default entitlement to dismiss skeptical alternatives is developed in Wright (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Thanks to Yuval Avner, Paul Boghossian, Stewart Cohen, Adam Elga, Greg Epstein, Matt Kotzen, Jim Pryor, Stephen Schiffer, and Nico Silins for helpful comments and discussion.

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