

## Bergmann's Dilemma, Dogmatism, and Common-Sense: A Proposal

The purpose of my thesis is to investigate the dilemma for internalists provided by Michael Bergmann in his book: *Justification without Awareness*. Bergmann claims that a necessary condition on justification, for internalists, is an awareness requirement. That is, S's belief B is justified only if (i) there is something, X, that contributes to the justification of B i.e. evidence for B or truth indicator for B or the satisfaction of some necessary condition of B's justification and (ii) S is aware (or potentially aware) of X<sup>1</sup>. Although some internalists would disagree that awareness is an essential feature of internalism, Bergmann captures what, I think, *most* internalists would agree is a distinctive feature. But one might think, "what reason(s) do internalists have for requiring awareness?" The answer lies within an objection that Bonjour gives against externalists: Norman the Clairvoyant.

Norman, under certain circumstances that usually obtain, is a completely reliable clairvoyant with respect to certain kinds of subject matter. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day Norman comes to believe that the President is in New York City, though he has no evidence either for or against this belief. In fact, the belief is true and results from his clairvoyant power under circumstances in which it is completely reliable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bergmann, Michael. *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2006. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection." *Acta Anal Acta Analytica* 31.1 (2015): 43-58. Web.

The problem is supposed to be that Norman lacks justification for his reliable clairvoyant beliefs because it seems as though Norman's belief is true by accident, from his perspective. The example illustrates what Bergmann sees as The Subject's Perspective Objection (SPO).

SPO: If the subject holding a belief isn't aware of what the belief has going for it, then she isn't aware of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or arbitrary conviction. From that we may conclude that from her perspective it is an accident that her belief is true. And that implies that it isn't a justified belief.<sup>3</sup>

Given the SPO, it is easy to see why internalists would endorse an awareness requirement. In fact, Bergmann claims that the SPO is the main motivation for awareness requirements, thus it follows that the SPO is the main motivation for internalism.

That being said, awareness can be of two varieties: strong or weak. Strong awareness "is awareness that involves conceiving of the justification-contributor that is the object of awareness as being in some way relevant to the truth or justification of the relevant belief<sup>4</sup>." On the other hand, weak awareness does not require such conceiving. Given this distinction, Bergmann presents his argument:

- (I) An essential feature of internalism is that it makes a subject's actual or potential awareness of some justification-contributor a necessary condition for the justification of any belief held by that subject.
- (II) The awareness required by internalism is either strong or weak awareness.
- (III) If the awareness required by internalism is strong awareness, then internalism has vicious regress problems leading to radical skepticism.

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<sup>3</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection."

<sup>4</sup> Bergmann, Michael. *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism*.

(IV) If the awareness required by internalism is weak awareness, then internalism is vulnerable to the SPO, in which case internalism loses its main motivation for imposing the awareness requirement.

(V) If internalism either leads to radical skepticism or loses its main motivation for imposing the awareness requirement (i.e avoiding the SPO), then we should not endorse internalism.

(VI) Therefore, we should not endorse internalism.<sup>5</sup>

For the purposes of this proposal, I will not offer Bergmann's defense of premises, rather I will focus on my plan of attack. I intend to show that Dogmatism, a form of internalism, can overcome Bergmann's dilemma. Following Logan Gage and Chris Tucker, Dogmatism in either endorsing strong or weak awareness, can overcome the dilemma and furthermore I will demonstrate that Dogmatism can better satisfy conditions of justification by appealing to more intuitive results than Bergmann's externalism. Lastly, I will attempt to establish an internalist common-sensism. For the remainder of this proposal, I will outline my research that has contributed to my plan, but of course realizing that my research is not complete.

The first question to be asked is: what is dogmatism? Dogmatism, widely construed is that:

If it seems to S that P, then, in the absence of defeaters, S thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that P.<sup>6</sup>

Notice that dogmatism is a theory of propositional justification, that is, S is propositionally justified for her belief that P if it is the case that it seems to her that P. But what does it mean

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<sup>5</sup> Bergmann, Michael. *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism*.

<sup>6</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection."

for that P to seem to S? Following Tolhurst, “seemings are intentional states because they have propositional content...seemings have the feel of truth, the feel of a state whose content reveals how things really are.”<sup>7</sup> It is easy to suppose that dogmatism can overcome Bergmann’s dilemma given this construal; however, it is important to note that Bergmann’s dilemma is not aimed at propositional justification, but rather doxastic justification. In his paper, “Phenomenal Conservatism and the Dilemma for Internalism,” he translates dogmatism into a doxastic theory of justification. He states, “justification requires awareness of a justification-contributor: it says that seemings are justification-contributors and that in order to do their justifying work, they must be conscious, which is just to say the subject must be aware of them.”<sup>8</sup> He goes on to ask what sort of awareness dogmatism requires: weak or strong? He distinguishes two forms of dogmatism as follows:

Weak Dogmatism: S’s belief that P is prima facie justified only if (1) it seems to S that P and (2) S is aware of this seeming (i.e it is a conscious seeming); it is *not* necessary that (3) S conceives of this seeming that P as being in some way relevant to the truth or justification of the belief that P.

Strong Dogmatism: S’s belief that P is prima facie justified only if (1) it seems to S that P and (2) S is aware of this seeming (i.e it is a conscious seeming); and (3) S conceives of this seeming that P as being in some way relevant to the truth or justification of the belief that P.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tolhurst, William. "Seemings." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35.3 (1998): 293-302. JSTOR. Web. 22 Feb. 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Tucker, Chris. *Seemings and Justification: New Essays on Dogmatism and Phenomenal Conservatism*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

<sup>9</sup> Tucker, Chris. *Seemings and Justification: New Essays on Dogmatism and Phenomenal Conservatism*.

Consider strong dogmatism's clause (3) and note that the question the strong dogmatist must answer is: must the conceiving be justified or not? If it is the case that the conceiving be justified, then Bergmann thinks this is doomed to infinite regress. If the conceiving is not required to be justified, then what could this possibly add to the doxastic justification of the target belief? I think that requiring the conceiving to be justified is a wrong move, that is, I think that Bergmann is correct in pointing out the vicious regress of requiring clause (3) to be justified. However, with regards to not requiring clause (3) to be justified, Bergmann seems to suggest that if the concept application cannot contribute anything to a truth connection, then the concept application adds nothing to the belief. Why think this is true? Well presumably we want the beliefs that are justified to be truth-aimed or likely true. Thus, requiring that the concept application add to the truth connection, it enhances the likelihood of the truth of the target belief. But surely satisfying a truth connection is not the only function of a necessary condition for justification. Recall that seemings have a phenomenal character that indicate the truth of how things really are, and that dogmatism is a theory of propositional justification. Thus for a belief that P to be doxastically justified, S must base her belief that P on the seeming. This seems to satisfy a truth connection, but moreover, following Tucker, it satisfies a mental connection between the 1st and 2nd order beliefs. This mental connection connects one's evidence (i.e the seeming) to one's belief. There is a case by Fumerton that illustrates this point.

Let's consider the case of weak dogmatism. Recall that Bergmann thinks internalist weak awareness falls victim to the SPO, that is:

SPO: If the subject holding a belief isn't aware of what the belief has going for it, then she isn't aware of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or arbitrary

conviction. From that we may conclude that from her perspective it is an accident that her belief is true. And that implies that it isn't a justified belief.<sup>10</sup>

The question, as it relates to dogmatism then is: "Can S have a conscious seeming that P while at the same time the truth of P is an accident from S's perspective?"<sup>11</sup> Bergmann thinks the answer is "yes" based on a the following situation:

S has an objectively good reason to believe that P, and does indeed believe that P, but S does not recognize the good reason to believe that P as a good reason to believe that P

<sup>12</sup>

This seems plausible, but Bergmann makes a mistake in his translation of dogmatism into its doxastic forms, he neglects to add a basing relation. For most internalists, "doxastic justification is simply a function of propositional justification plus proper basing."<sup>13</sup> Presumably, Bergmann thought that clause (3) of strong dogmatism was sufficient, but that doesn't seem to fit the bill. Of course S could conceive of the seeming as relevant, but fail to have it enter her body of evidence to support her belief that P. But if we include the basing relation such that: S must base the belief that P upon S's seeming that P, and all other conditions of weak dogmatism are met, it is not at all obvious that the belief's being true is an accident from her perspective. If the basing relation is met and all other conditions of weak dogmatism are met, then subject S has an epistemic reason to believe that P upon which the belief is based (presuming no defeaters are present).

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<sup>10</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection."

<sup>11</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection."

<sup>12</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection."

<sup>13</sup> Gage, Logan Paul. "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Subject's Perspective Objection."

The above shows my approach to Bergmann's dilemma for internalism utilizing dogmatism. I have further research to conduct to show that my dogmatism can yield more intuitive results than Bergmann's externalism. My appeal to common-sense philosophy like that of G.E. Moore and Thomas Reid will hopefully confirm these results and make the case for a common-sense internalism. What I mean by results is how Bergmann's externalism and my dogmatism fare when applied to various cases such as: the new evil demon problem, the speckled hen problem, and Markie's gold mining case.

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