

Seemings and Justification: New Essays on Dogmatism and Phenomenal Conservatism. EDITED BY CHRIS TUCKER (New York: OUP, 2013. Pp. 384. Price US\$74.)

The claim that many of our beliefs are epistemically justified because they are based on *seemings*—i.e. on the way things seem—appears *prima facie* plausible. For example, I have a reason for believing that the cat is on the mat because it *seems* visually so. I have a reason for believing that I went home by car because I *seem* to remember driving home. I have a reason for believing that $5+7=12$ because this *seems* intuitively correct. *Phenomenal conservatism* (PC) accounts systematically for the justifying force of seemings. According to PC if it seems to *S* that *P*, in the absence of defeaters *S* has *prima facie* justification for believing *P*. *S*'s justification for *P* is in this case *immediate*, in the sense that it is not constituted (not even in part) by *S*'s antecedent justification for believing anything else. PC is most commonly associated with Michael Huemer's work, but others epistemologists—such as Jim Pryor and John Pollock—have proposed similar views though less general than PC. Huemer and many other phenomenal conservatives take seemings to be *sui generis* propositional attitudes, different from beliefs and inclinations to believe. PC's philosophical appeal would seem to rest on two main reasons: PC supplies a rationale for many of our attributions of epistemic justification and it affords us the means to respond to celebrated sceptical and anti-foundationalist challenges (those that assume that the justification for any belief must always rests on antecedent justification for other beliefs.)

The fourteen articles included in the six parts of *Seemings and Justification* are signed by some of the most interesting philosophers active today. Each contribution focuses on PC or domain-restricted versions of PC—which Tucker dubs (forms of) *dogmatism*—with the purpose to assess, defend, enhance or reject these views. The contributions are preceded by a rich and brilliant introduction by the editor himself. Tucker does a great job in dissecting and elucidating PC, explaining its salience in contemporary epistemology, its merits and its weaknesses. He suggests

solutions for some of PC's acknowledged difficulties. Tucker also summarises and systematises the contents of the contributions into one comprehensive framework.

Part I, "Seemings and Seeming Reports", leads off with a paper by Andrew Cullison endorsing the view that seemings are *sui generis* propositional attitudes and arguing that at least some of them have *Russellian* propositions as contents. This form of semantic externalism looks incoherent with the form epistemological internalism naturally associated with PC. Nevertheless, Cullison proposes an interesting way to reconcile these two perspectives. In the next paper, Earl Conee defends the view that if seemings exist, they are most plausibly mere beliefs or inclinations to believe that a given mental state *M*—e.g. a sensation—counts in favour of a proposition *P*. Conee also sheds doubts on PC by arguing that a seeming that *P* based on *M* can justify *P* only when *M* is *actually* an indicator of the truth of *P*.

Part II, "Foundations of Dogmatism", opens with a neat entry by Jessica Brown defending the thesis that we have immediate justification for believing the contents of at least some of our intuitions. Brown's argument appears less vulnerable than arguments by others in support of the same thesis because it deliberately makes no specific assumption about the ontology of intuitions. The ensuing paper, by Jim Pryor is insightful, clear and balanced. Pryor defends a very weak version of PC dubbed by him *credulism*. Consider a proposition *P*. Let *U* be the negation of a potential undermining defeater of *S*'s seeming-based justification for *P*. Credulism holds that *S*'s seeming-based justification for *P* is *not* constituted by *S*'s antecedent justification for *at least some Us*. Credulism appears plausible but also incompatible, in various senses, with Bayesianism. Pryor explores different ways to neutralise these perceived incompatibilities by exposing substantive epistemological assumptions concealed within the Bayesian formalism.

Part III, "Seemings and Epistemic Internalism", contains the contributions by Matthias Steup and Michael Bergmann. Although Steup rejects PC, he contends that the appeal to seemings with attested and recorded reliability allows us to answer Bergmann's so-called *dilemma for internalism*.

Bergmann returns to this dilemma with the twofold purpose of clarifying it and tailoring a version of it to PC. Bergmann concludes that neither PC nor Steup's epistemological position can actually help resolve his dilemma. (In his contribution, Huemer offers a promising response to Bergmann.)

Part IV, "The Significance of Seemings within Specific Domains", kicks off with Robert Audi's article exploring both the psychological and the normative role of seemings in the domains of perception, memory, testimony and intuition. Audi argues that seemings (with the possible exception of intuitive ones) don't have any fundamental normative role. He concedes nevertheless that seemings may turn out to be ineliminable features of a "full-scale theory of rationality" because they have a considerable bearing on which beliefs we *actually* entertain. In the next paper, Michael DePaul explores the significance of PC for epistemology of disagreement. Building on Huemer's earlier work, DePaul produces novel arguments for the thesis that if seemings have justifying force, there is reason to be optimistic about the possibility of rational disagreement.

Part V, "Dealing with Cognitive Penetration", includes the articles by Matthew McGrath, Peter Markie and Berit Brogaard. Say that S 's seeming that P is *cognitively penetrated* by S 's mental state M (e.g. a desire, belief, experience etc.) just in case M (partly) causes S 's seeming that P . Some epistemologist finds cognitive penetration worrisome. They think, for instance, that if S 's seeming that P is caused by S 's *wishful* thinking, this seeming can provide S with no degree of (even *prima facie*) justification for P . The contributions in Part V propose principled restrictions for PC to enable phenomenal conservatives to dismiss worries of this type. In particular, McGrath divides seemings into those that are quasi-inferred from other propositional attitudes and those that are not. He proposes that the seemings of the latter type can always supply foundational justification for their contents, whereas the quasi-inferred seemings can justify their contents only if the beliefs or seemings from which they are quasi-inferred can do it independently. A possible criticism of McGrath's stimulating contribution is that the notion of quasi-inference is insufficiently elucidated in his discussion. Markie argues that seemings can justify their contents if and only if

they are the products of *knowledge how*. Brogaard defends what she calls *sensible dogmatism*, which imposes specific internalist and externalist constraints on the type of seemings provided with justifying force. Since phenomenal conservatism is typically used to favour internalism, a worry is that epistemologists may find Brogaard's ingenious variant of PC unserviceable.

Part VI ("Phenomenal Conservatism") begins with a paper by William Lycan that offers an original way of motivating and defending a weak version of PC (according to which the immediate justification furnished by seemings is typically infinitesimal). Lycan suggests that "mother nature" has designed us to rely on seemings and argues that his version of PC can be combined with his *explanationist coherentism* to resolve one of its central difficulties. A reason of interest for this paper is that it casts bridges between epistemology of seemings and more traditional epistemology and investigates how different sources of epistemic justification work together. In the following paper Michael Tooley launches a sweeping attack on PC that targets both the ontology and the epistemology of seemings specifically defended by Michael Huemer. I'm not quite sure of the actual relevance of some of Tooley's epistemological objections. Tooley contends at the end that his own direct acquaintance approach is superior to PC. Part VI closes with Huemer's responses to several of the criticisms of PC made in this volume. Many responses are forceful and *prima facie* plausible. Others—sometimes by admission of Huemer himself—call for clarification and completion. It is apparent that Huemer has much more to say on these topics and that he will return to them in further work.

Seemings and Justification is suitable for an audience of postgraduate students and scholars of philosophy who want to be introduced to PC and/or intend to go deeper into some of its more or less problematic features and implications. It is hard to overstate the wide-ranging epistemological consequences of PC, which cover issues of (among other things) epistemological internalism, scepticism, foundationalism, explanationism, basic justification, perceptual, memorial, and a priori justification. Those who are interested in these topics should definitely read Tucker's book.

