4

Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism in Religious Epistemology

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Phenomenal conservatism, as I discuss it in this chapter, is a theory of evidence possession. It holds that if it seems to a subject that P, then the subject thereby possesses evidence which supports P. In this chapter I apply phenomenal conservatism to religious belief with the aim of securing two theses. First, phenomenal conservatism is better suited than is proper functionalism to explain how a particular type of religious belief formation can lead to non-inferentially justified religious beliefs. Second, phenomenal conservatism makes evidence so easy to obtain that the truth of evidentialism wouldn't be much of an obstacle to justified religious belief. In Section 1, I explicate the evidentialist principle that will be the focus of this paper, and in Section 2, I explicate phenomenal conservatism and explain what it means for it to seem that P. The third and fourth sections secure the two main conclusions of the paper, respectively. Given how easy it is to acquire evidence according to phenomenal conservatism, it is natural to object that the principle is absurdly permissive. In Section 5, I argue that this objection fails.

1 Evidentialism

My main goal in this section is to clarify the sort of evidentialism that will be the focus of this paper (though I consider a very different form of evidentialism in Section 4.3). I begin with this task because it provides a convenient way to introduce a number of key terms that will be important in the rest of the paper.

Evidentialism, in religious epistemology, holds that religious beliefs must satisfy some evidential requirement if they are to have some epistemic status, such as justification or knowledge. I focus on a version of evidentialism which applies to any domain not merely the religious one. It holds that a subject has a certain type of justification for

a proposition just in case she has undefeated evidence for it; however, it does not further demand that the evidence be inferential (i.e. believing the premises of a good argument). To arrive at a more precise understanding of this evidentialism, we need to clarify the type of justification at issue by making two distinctions.

The first distinction is between doxastic and propositional justification. *Doxastic justification*, which Earl Conee and Richard Feldman call 'well-foundedness,' is a property of *beliefs*.[1] *Propositional justification*, on the other hand, is a property that a *proposition* has relative to a subject. Suppose that some thing X (e.g. a belief or an experience) provides propositional justification for P. It is common to hold that X provides doxastic justification for one's belief in P only if that belief is *based on* X.[2]

An important result of the preceding characterizations is that one can have propositional justification for P even though her belief that P fails to be doxastically justified.[3] Suppose, for example, that a lawyer believes that his client is innocent, he has powerful evidence that his client is innocent, but he bases this belief, not on his powerful evidence, but on the testimony of a magic 8-ball. The lawyer's powerful evidence propositionally justifies for him the proposition that his client is innocent; however, since his belief in the client's innocence isn't based on this evidence, this evidence doesn't doxastically justify his belief that his client is innocent. In this paper, I talk primarily about *propositional* justification.

The second distinction concerns two types of propositional justification, *prima facie* and *ultima facie* (propositional) justification. One has an *ultima facie justification* for P just in case it is rational to believe P. One has *prima facie justification* for P just in case she has *ultima facie* justification for P in the absence of relevant defeaters. A *defeater* is something that prevents *prima facie* justification from constituting *ultima facie* justification. We can illustrate these concepts with the following example.

Suppose Mary has some evidence E1 which supports the claim that Marty will moonwalk at tonight's talent show. This evidence might include her knowledge that Marty claims he will do the moonwalk, that his act is called the 'Magical Moonwalk' and that he has been practicing the moonwalk for months. In such a case, she would have *prima facie* justification for the claim that Marty will moonwalk tonight. If there are no relevant defeaters, then some small portion of Mary's total evidence, namely E1, would provide her with *ultima facie* justification.

[1] *Evidentialism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 93.

[2] Cf. Michael Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 4–5 and Juan Comesana, 'Evidentialist Reliabilism' (*Nous* forthcoming), section 2. The basing relation is an important but poorly understood relation. Epistemologists generally hold that a belief B is based on another mental state M only if M non-deviantly causes B (e.g. Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 129). It is highly controversial, however, as to what makes the relevant type of causation 'non-deviant' and what further requirement, if any, should be imposed on the basing relation.

[3] The above characterizations are silent on whether one can have doxastic justification without propositional justification.

Yet suppose that Mary has some evidence E2 that even more strongly supports the conclusion that Marty will *not* moonwalk at the competition. For example, she might know that he was just seriously injured in a car accident and, to make matters worse, his favorite moonwalking shoes were just stolen. In this example, the *prima facie* justification provided by Mary's evidence, E1, would be defeated by her competing evidence, E2. Although she would have *prima facie* justification for P, she would fail to have *ultima facie* justification for P.

Although I discuss both *prima facie* and *ultima facie* justification, I focus on a version of evidentialism that most directly concerns the latter. Its basic idea is that *all* of a person's evidence and *only* a person's evidence determines whether she has *ultima facie* justification for P. More precisely:

Evidentialism about Propositional Justification: S has ultima facie propositional justification for P just in case (i) S has some evidence E1 that supports[4] P, and (ii) S does not have any more inclusive body of evidence E2 that fails to support P.[5]

Although this evidentialism does not explicitly mention *prima facie* justification or defeaters, it is still very relevant to those topics. The first condition is tantamount to the claim that one has *prima facie* justification for P just in case she has evidence for it. The second condition is often called a 'no defeater condition' because it is tantamount to the claim that a subject's *prima facie* justification is defeated just in case she has some more inclusive body of evidence which fails to support P. In slogan form, this evidentialism says that a proposition is *ultima facie* justified for a subject just in case the subject has undefeated evidence for it. Unless I indicate otherwise, when I henceforth say 'justification' and 'evidentialism' I will mean '*ultima facie* propositional justification' and 'Evidentialism about Propositional Justification' respectively.

[4] Others use different terminology to refer to this support relation. Richard Swinburne calls this relation 'epistemic probability' in his *Epistemic Justification* and his 'Evidentialism,' in Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quin (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd edn (Malden, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), pp. 681–8. Conee and Feldman use the term 'fit.' There is little agreement about what it takes for support. Swinburne holds that evidential support is a type of logical probability in his *Epistemic Justification* and 'Evidentialism.' Conee and Feldman hold that it is deeply connected to best explanation in their 'Evidence,' in Quentin Smith (ed), *Epistemology: New Essays* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 97–8. Alvin Plantinga holds that it is deeply connected to proper function in his *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 168. I won't defend a complete account of support, but in the next section I do object to Plantinga's account.

[5] Although it is worded very differently, my evidentialism is roughly equivalent to that of Conee and Feldman, the main difference being that their evidentialist thesis covers degrees of justification and mine doesn't (*Evidentialism*, p. 83). Swinburne's evidentialism is intended to be equivalent to Conee and Feldman's, but it isn't ('Evidentialism,' p. 681). Their evidentialism concerns propositional justification and his concerns doxastic justification; Conee and Feldman don't address doxastic justification, or well-foundedness, until p. 93. In addition, Swinburne's version of evidentialism is obviously false, as it fails to have a no defeater condition, i.e. a counterpart to (ii) (or, alternatively, his evidentialism implausibly demands that one base a belief on one's *total* evidence).

2 Phenomenal conservatism

I introduced, in the previous section, one of the two main characters in this paper. My goal in this section is to introduce the second main character, namely phenomenal conservatism. In 2.1, I provide a general introduction to the view. In Section 2.2, I distinguish seemings from sensations, because this oft-missed distinction is needed to properly assess the merits of phenomenal conservatism (eg see Section 3 below).

2.1 Phenomenal conservatism: the basic idea

Phenomenal conservatism is traditionally construed as a view about propositional justification: if it seems to S that P, then in the absence of defeaters, S has propositional justification for P.[6] Since this volume concerns the role of evidence in rational religious belief, I will construe it as a thesis about evidence possession:

Phenomenal Conservatism: if it seems to S that P, then S thereby has evidence which supports P.

When I say that some evidence *supports* P, I will mean that the evidence for P is strong enough to provide P with propositional justification in the absence of defeaters. Hence, the phenomenal conservative thesis about justification follows from this thesis about evidence possession.

Phenomenal Conservatism is compatible both with evidentialism and its denial. Recall that evidentialism holds that one has justification for P just in case one possesses undefeated evidence for P. Phenomenal conservatism is compatible with evidentialism because the latter is silent concerning when one possesses (undefeated) evidence for P. In other words, it is no contradiction to hold both that undefeated evidence is necessary and sufficient for justification (i.e. endorse evidentialism) and that seemings always provide evidence (i.e. endorse phenomenal conservatism). Phenomenal conservatism is compatible with the *denial* of evidentialism because it doesn't entail that evidence is necessary for justification. In other words, it is no contradiction to hold that seemings suffice for evidence (i.e. endorse phenomenal conservatism), but then deny that evidence is required for justification (i.e. deny evidentialism).

As I have construed it, phenomenal conservatism says that I have evidence for P if it seems to me that P. But what is a seeming? A seeming that P is merely a certain kind of

[6] I defend this type of phenomenal conservatism under the label 'dogmatism' in my 'Why Open Minded People Should Endorse Dogmatism' (2010), *Philosophical Perspectives* 24, pp. 529–45. Huemer defends it in his *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2001) and 'Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism' (2007), *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74, pp. 30–55. Conee defends the view, but he uses the term 'seeming evidentialism' and it isn't clear whether he actually endorses it. See Conee and Feldman's *Evidentialism*, pp. 11–36. Criticisms of phenomenal conservatism include Roger White's 'Problems for Dogmatism' (2006). *Philosophical Studies*, 131, pp. 525–57; Crispin Wright's 'The Perils of Dogmatism' in Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay (eds.), *Themes from G. E. Moore: New Essays in Epistemology and Ethics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008); pp. 119–20 of Peter Markie, 'Epistemically Appropriate Perceptual Belief' (2006), *Nous* 40, pp. 118–42 and pp. 356–7 of his 'The Mystery of Perceptual Justification' (2005), *Philosophical Studies* 126, pp. 347–73.

experience with propositional content. What distinguishes seemings from other experiences is their peculiar phenomenal character, which Huemer calls 'forcefulness,' though I prefer the term 'assertiveness.'[7] William Tollhurst says that seemings 'have the feel of truth, the feel of a state whose content reveals how things really are.'[8] The phenomenology of a seeming makes it feel as though the seeming is 'recommending' its propositional content as true or 'assuring' us of the content's truth. All sorts of propositions might seem true in this sense. Right now it seems to me that there is a desk in front of me, that $2+2=4$, that I have a slight headache, and that phenomenal conservatism is true.

In everyday speech, I might say, 'Well, it seems to me that the Republican candidates have the most political experience,' and I might simply mean that I *believe* that the Republican candidates have the most experience. As I use the term, however, a seeming that P is *not* a belief that P. Nor does 'it seems to me that P' entail 'I believe that P.' A proposition might seem necessarily true even though I know it leads to paradox and so disbelieve it. Or a table may seem to be red even though I know it is really white and illuminated by red lights. Nor is a seeming that P an inclination or disposition to believe P. A perceptual seeming that the cheese is old and moldy *explains* why I am inclined to have a belief with that content. I do think that my use of 'seeming' has some currency in every day speech, but my characterization of this term is at least partly stipulative (cf. Huemer (2007), pp. 30–1).

Seemings count as non-inferential evidence. E is (some of) S's *non-inferential* evidence for P only if E is one or more of S's non-doxastic mental states (e.g. an experience). E is (some of) S's *inferential evidence* for P only if E is one or more of S's beliefs.[9] Since a seeming that P is an experience and not a belief, it counts as non-inferential evidence for P. A justified belief in the premises of a good argument for P counts as inferential evidence for P.

2.2 *Seemings vs. sensations*

It is commonly assumed that a sensation is a special kind of seeming,[10] but I argue that this is incorrect. Since the distinction between seemings and sensations will be important in the next section, I need to make this distinction at least somewhat clear. Sensations, like seemings, are experiences, and it is plausible that at least some of them have

[7] *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*, pp. 77–9.

[8] See his 'Seemings' (1998), *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35, 293–302, pp. 298–9.

[9] I talk here and elsewhere as though a subject's evidence is some *mental state* rather than, say, the propositional content of her mental states. I talk this way because it is convenient. For an introduction to the ontology of evidence, see John Turri, 'The Ontology of Epistemic Reasons' (2009), *Nous* 43, pp. 490–512. Swinburne suggests that 'an evidentialist should construe someone's evidence as encompassing no more than the *content* of their basic beliefs' (see his 'Evidentialism', p. 681, emphasis mine). This suggestion is surprising since he considers himself an evidentialist and, in his earlier work, he holds that the subject's evidence is not the propositional content of certain mental states, but the mental states themselves (*Epistemic Justification*, p. 152).

[10] See, e.g. Tolhurst's 'Seemings,' p. 300 and Huemer's *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*, pp. 58–79.

content. I have a visual sensation when I look at my dog. It is the mental 'picture' or visual image of a little white creature wearing a blue halter. I have an auditory sensation when I hear my dog barking. It is the mental 'sound' of the bark, a mental phenomenon that causes me great irritation. At the very least, there are also tactile, olfactory, gustatory and perhaps even proprioceptive sensations.

Sensations and seemings, in my view, are distinct kinds of experiences. There are a variety of considerations that make this view at least plausible. First, there are introspective considerations. Alvin Plantinga remarks:

> Upon being appeared to a familiar way, I may form the belief that I perceive a branch of a peculiarly jagged shape. Here there is, of course, sensuous experience; but there is a sort of nonsensous experience involved as well, an experience distinct from that sensuous experience but nonetheless connected with the formation of the belief in question. That belief has a certain felt attractiveness or naturalness, a sort of perceived fittingness; it feels like the *right* belief in the circumstances.[11]

Plantinga suggests that typically when we have a sensation, such as a visual image, it is accompanied by some nonsensuous experience, which is 'a certain felt attractiveness or naturalness, a sort of perceived fittingness.' What I want to suggest (whether Plantinga would agree or not) is that Plantinga's nonsensuous experience just is a seeming that the branch has a particularly jagged shape. What we ordinarily think of as a perceptual experience, in my view, is really a composite of a seeming and its accompanying sensuous experience, or sensation.

A thought experiment confirms the testimony of introspection. Right now I have a visual image in my mind, one that represents a desk's being in front of me, but the content of this image is far too rich for me to describe fully. My powers of imagination nonetheless could be so powerful that I could imagine a picture that is phenomenally just like the one that is now in front of my mind.[12] Both the perceptual and imagined 'pictures' that a desk is in front of me have the same phenomenology; however, only the perceptual picture accompanies a seeming that there is a desk in front of me. When I have a visual image of a desk's being in front of me, it *seems* that there is a desk in front of me. When I have an imagined image of a desk's being in front of me, it does *not* seem that there is a desk in front of me. (But nor does it necessarily seem that there is not a desk in front of me either.) Since the sensation and imagination are phenomenally identical and the imagination isn't itself a seeming (i.e. it doesn't come with assertiveness), the sensation isn't itself a seeming.[13]

[11] *Warrant and Proper Function*, pp. 91–2, emphasis original.

[12] If a mental picture gets its representational content in part by how it is caused (if such things even have content), then the imagined picture will not have the same content as the one that is, in fact, caused by a desk and a computer. Yet the two pictures would still 'look' the same despite having different contents.

[13] Cf. Huemer's *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*, p. 77.

If seemings and sensations really are distinct,[14] you might expect to find one without the other, and this is precisely what we find. A priori intuitions are plausible examples of seemings that are not accompanied by a sensation. More controversially, there are even perceptual seemings which fail to be accompanied by any sensation. The phenomenology of proprioception doesn't seem as rich as that of, say, vision or audition, and perhaps this is because it typically involves only proprioceptive seemings and not proprioceptive sensations, if there are such things.[15] Or consider the phenomena of blindsight. Blindsighted patients apparently lack visual imagery in a certain region of their visual field, but they nonetheless show remarkable sensitivity to the region corresponding to their 'blindspot.' This sensitivity may be explained by the presence of (reliable) seemings despite the absence of some corresponding sensation.[16]

There also seem to be some sensations which fail to be accompanied by seemings. Some patients with visual associative agnosia apparently know what keys are, have very detailed visual imagery of a key, and nonetheless fail to identify something as a key. Plausibly, the problem is that these patients fail to have the seemings (e.g. the seeming that this object is a key) which would allow them to identify keys as such.[17] The above thought experiment is also relevant here. The imagined image from the thought experiment presumably fails to be a sensation because it was caused by my hypothetical powerful imagination, not my perceptual faculties. Yet it is sensation-like insofar as it is phenomenally identical with the sensation that I am currently having, and despite being sensation-like, it isn't accompanied by a seeming that its content is true.

3 Phenomenal conservatism vs. proper functionalism

Plantinga, following Calvin, holds that some people form non-inferentially warranted Christian beliefs in light of the 'glories of nature.'[18] My admiration of a beautiful sunset, for example, might in some sense trigger the belief that God exists and loves me, and Plantinga holds that a belief formed in this way very well may be warranted. *Warrant* is the property enough of which makes true belief knowledge, and it is generally assumed that justification is required for warrant. My goal in this section is not to argue that this method of belief formation genuinely produces warrant or justification; I will simply assume that it does (or at least that it can) produce justification. Rather, my goal is to argue that

[14] Strictly speaking, I don't need the claim that seemings and sensations are *always* distinct kinds of experiences. Suppose you think that a sensation can be a seeming if it has the property I called 'assertiveness.' You still could explain everything I want to explain if you hold the following claims: (i) one can have a sensation without having a corresponding seeming; (ii) one can have a seeming without having a corresponding sensation; and (iii) one can have a sensation (e.g. of a sunset) and yet have a seeming with some unrelated content (e.g. that God loves me). Once (i)–(iii) are accepted, I simply find it easier to talk as though seemings and sensations are always distinct.

[15] Cf. Huemer's *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*, p. 67.

[16] See my 'Why Open-Minded People Should Endorse Dogmatism,' section 1.

[17] Ibid.

[18] *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 172–9.

phenomenal conservatism is better suited than is proper functionalism to explain how it can produce such justification. I will argue, in 3.1, that any such explanation should satisfy a certain criterion. In 3.2, I show that the proper functionalist explanation fails to satisfy this criterion and, in 3.3, that phenomenal conservatism is to be preferred.

3.1 An important criterion

Suppose that, in response to his witnessing a particularly marvelous sunset, someone believes that God loves him. Witnessing a particularly marvelous sunset involves at the very least a visual image of the sunset, but perhaps it also involves a feeling of admiration or awe as well. It strikes me as implausible that the visual image of the sunset, by itself or when combined solely with the feeling of awe, can be evidence for the claim that God loves one. Bear with me while I (attempt to) elicit this intuition.

Consider:

(1) My belief that my students hate Keystone Light beer can evidentially support a belief in Gödel's (First Incompleteness) Theorem.

This claim says that the beer proposition can support Gödel's Theorem all by itself, but that seems absurd. Of course, the beer proposition might support Gödel's Theorem when conjoined with other beliefs (e.g. the belief that if the beer proposition is true, then so is Gödel's Theorem).[19] Presumably, 1 seems absurd because my belief about Keystone Light doesn't have the right content to be evidence for Gödel's Theorem. In any event, it is widely held that 1 is counterintuitive. Some accounts of evidential support are committed to the truth of 1, and even the proponents of these views often concede that this commitment is a significant cost of their views.[20]

Now consider the claim that:

(2) My sensation and admiration of a sunset can evidentially support a belief in Gödel's Theorem.

2 seems just as counterintuitive as 1. The sensation and admiration of a sunset, whether taken jointly or individually, are evidentially irrelevant to whether Gödel's Theorem is true. Of course, the sunset sensation (and the awe) might support a belief in Gödel's Theorem when conjoined with other experiences or beliefs (e.g. the belief that if one has a sensation of a sunset, then Gödel's Theorem is true). Presumably, the sensation and admiration of a sunset, by themselves, are evidentially irrelevant to Gödel's Theorem because they don't have the right content to be evidence for Gödel's Theorem.

[19] *Objection*: If the theorem is true, then it is necessarily true. If it is necessarily true, then every proposition entails it (because there is no world where some proposition is true and the theorem is false). So the beer proposition evidentially supports Gödel's theorem after all. *Reply*: Yes, every proposition entails every necessary truth, but this does not reveal that every proposition supports every necessary truth; rather, it reveals that entailment does not suffice for evidential support.

[20] See, e.g., Comesaña's 'Reliabilist Evidentialism,' sec. 8.2.

Now that we have 1 and 2 in the back of our minds, consider again:

(3) My sensation and admiration of a sunset can evidentially support a belief that God loves one.

The sensation and admiration of a sunset, whether taken jointly or individually, seem evidentially irrelevant to the claim that God loves one. Of course, the sunset sensation might support the idea that God loves one when conjoined with other experiences or beliefs (e.g. the belief that one's ability to appreciate a sunset is best explained by the existence of a loving God). Presumably, the sensation and awe of the sunset seem irrelevant to whether God loves one because they don't have the right content to be evidence for the existence of a God who loves one.

The falsity of 3 reveals an important criterion. If a theory of justification is to allow the glories of nature to play a role in the justification of religious belief, it needs to do so without allowing the visual image or admiration of the sunset to play an *evidential* role. That is, a theory of justification needs to respect the fact that the visual image and admiration of the sunset, by themselves, are evidentially irrelevant to whether God loves one. Unfortunately, proper function accounts of evidence, such as those of Plantinga,[21] Bergmann,[22] and Richard Otte[23] fail to respect this fact.

3.2 The proper functionalist explanation

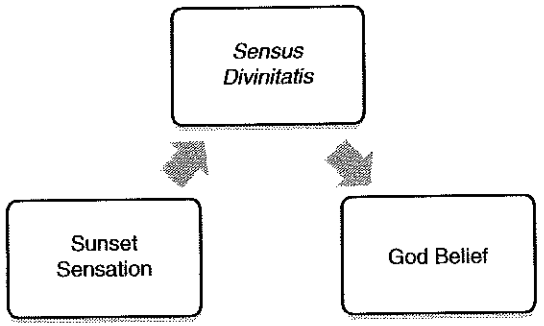
Proper functionalists about justification tend to hold that evidentialism is false because evidence isn't *necessary* for justification.[24] Nonetheless, they tend to hold that having evidence for P is *sufficient* for *prima facie* justification. They can allow that evidence is sufficient for *prima facie* justification because they understand evidence in terms of proper function. Plantinga's account of evidential support is complicated,[25] but the complications won't affect the following discussion.[26] Hence, we can focus on this relatively simple

Proper Function Account of Evidence: S's mental state M evidentially supports P just in case it is proper function for S to believe P on the basis of M.

The basic idea of this account, according to Bergmann, is that 'the fittingness of a doxastic response to evidence is contingent upon the *proper function* of the cognitive faculties in question.'[27] Since evidence is understood in terms of proper function, M might be evidence for believing P for some possible creatures but not others.[28]

[21] *Warrant and Proper Function*, p. 168.
[22] *Justification without Awareness*, p. 130.
[23] 'A Theistic Conception of Probability' (1987), *Faith and Philosophy*, 4, 427–47.
[24] See, e.g., Bergmann's *Justification without Awareness*, pp. 63–4.
[25] *Warrant and Proper Function*, p. 168.
[26] Besides greater complication, Plantinga's account is restricted only to when one belief supports another, but in conversation, he said he would be happy to generalize his account to when any mental state supports a belief.
[27] *Justification without Awareness*, p. 168.
[28] Ibid. 118–21.

When this proper function account of evidence is applied to the case at hand, it allows a visual image of a sunset (perhaps in combination with a feeling of admiration) to support the claim that God loves one. Plantinga supposes that we have a faculty, the *sensus divinitatis*, which is designed to form religious beliefs.[29] This faculty takes our visual image (and admiration of) the sunset as inputs and then produces belief that God loves one or some other religious belief as an output. Here is the basic picture:



Since humans are designed to have a *sensus divinitatis* that functions this way, it is proper function for them to believe certain religious beliefs on the basis of the visual image and/or admiration of the sunset. Given the Proper Function Account of Evidence, it follows that the visual image and admiration of the sunset support the claim that God loves one, which violates the criterion from the previous sub-section.

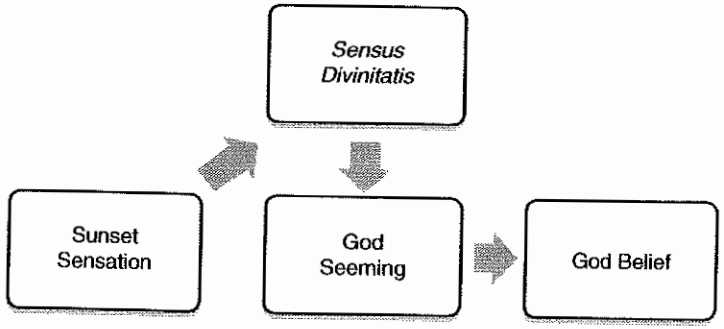
3.3 The superiority of phenomenal conservatism's explanation

One may think that phenomenal conservatism fares little better at explaining how an appreciation of the glories of nature contributes to the justification of religious beliefs. She might reason as follows. (i) When one has a visual image of a sunset, it is natural to suppose that this image has the content *that there is a sunset*; however, (ii) it would be bizarre to suppose that the image has the content *that God loves me*. Hence, (iii) it seems to the subject that there is a sunset, but it doesn't seem that God loves one. (iv) Since one wouldn't have a seeming that God loves one, it is doubtful that phenomenal conservatism can explain how an appreciation of the glories of nature can justify a belief that God loves one.

The problem with this objection is the transition from (ii) to (iii). This transition apparently assumes that the content of a seeming must be identical to or closely resemble the content of the sensation, but these two states are distinct and their contents can differ widely (see above, Section 2.2). The phenomenal conservative can explain the justificatory power of this type of religious belief formation simply by

[29] See, e.g., *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 173–5.

re-describing the role of the *sensus divinitatis*. If in response to the visual image of the sunset it produces a belief that God loves one directly and without the mediation of, say, a seeming that God loves one, then the phenomenal conservative should say that the subject lacks evidence for the belief (unless, of course, he has evidence for this belief in some other way). Yet, in response to a visual image of a beautiful sunset, the *sensus divinitatis* might be designed to produce a seeming about God, his love, power, etc. The re-described picture is:



On this picture,[30] an appreciation of the glories of nature leads to a justified non-inferential belief that God loves one, not because the appreciation itself provides good evidence for that claim, but because it triggers an evidentially relevant seeming. Although it doesn't seem plausible that a sunset sensation can provide evidence for God's loving one, even proper functionalists will grant that a seeming that God loves one can or does provide evidence for God's loving one.

The phenomenal conservative explains how an appreciation of the glories of nature can contribute non-inferential evidence for religious beliefs by re-describing the *sensus divinitatis*: it takes an appreciation of a sunset as an input and produces, not a belief, but a seeming that God loves one. The proper functionalist can accept the same description of the *sensus divinitatis*. She could then say that we are designed to accept religious beliefs, not on the basis of the visual image itself, but on the basis of the seemings triggered by the visual images. Given this re-description, the Proper Function Account of Evidence no longer has the unsavory implication that the visual image of the sunset supports the claim that God loves one. For it would be proper function to believe that God loves one on the basis of the relevant seeming, not the visual image. So, one might think, the proper functionalist fares no worse than the phenomenal conservative.

The proposed response merely pushes the problem back. If the proper functionalist accepts my re-description of the *sensus divinitatis*, she avoids the counterintuitive

[30] This picture doesn't represent a faculty that mediates the transition between the God seeming and the God belief, but the existence of such a faculty would not affect my arguments in the paper.

implication that the sunset sensation supports the claim that God loves one in the *actual world*. But design plans are flexible. Even if *sensus divinitatis* is designed to produce religious seemings, it could have been designed to produce religious beliefs instead—if not for us, then for some other possible creature. The proper functionalist is still stuck with the counterintuitive consequence that the visual image of a sunset, by itself, *could* support the claim that God loves one.[31]

I have been arguing that phenomenal conservatism is better suited than is proper functionalism to explain how the glories of nature can lead to a justified religious belief. The basic idea of this argument is that the phenomenal conservative relies on a more plausible theory of evidence than does proper functionalism. This claim is supported by two intuitions. The first is that a sensation of a sunset, by itself (or in conjunction with a feeling of awe), cannot provide evidence for the claim that God loves one. I recognize that die-hard proper functionalists may not share this intuition, but I expect it to be widely-shared anyhow. The second intuition is that a seeming that God loves one can be evidence for the claim that God loves one. Even those who reject phenomenal conservatism concede that the second intuition is at least plausible.

4 Phenomenal conservatism and evidentialism

I promised in the introduction that I would argue for two main conclusions. In the previous section, I secured the first, that phenomenal conservatism is better suited than is proper functionalism to explain how an appreciation of the glories of nature can lead to justified religious belief. In this section, I secure the second, that if phenomenal conservatism is true, then it is so easy to acquire evidence that it doesn't really matter whether evidentialism is true. The second thesis, more precisely, is that, when conjoined with phenomenal conservatism, evidentialism allows cognitively unsophisticated subjects to have justified religious beliefs, and it allows them to have such beliefs even if they lack access to experts in the religious community who can provide persuasive arguments for those beliefs. Evidentialism holds that undefeated evidence suffices for justification. In 4.1, I argue that phenomenal conservatism makes it easy to have evidence for one's religious beliefs, and, in 4.2, I argue that it makes it easy to have *undefeated* evidence for religious beliefs. In 4.3, I consider whether a disparate type of evidentialism would be a significant obstacle to epistemically valuable religious belief even if phenomenal conservatism were true.

4.1 Given phenomenal conservatism, evidence is cheap

Recall that evidentialism, as we discussed it in Section 1, is the claim that one has (propositional) justification to believe P just in case one has some evidence E that

[31] For additional counterexamples to the proper function account of evidence and externalist accounts more generally, see my 'Evidential Support: What it is, Why it Matters, and Why Externalist Accounts Fail' (manuscript).

supports P and does not have any more inclusive body of evidence which fails to support P. Whether this evidentialism imposes a significant constraint on justified religious belief depends on how easy it is to acquire evidence. If evidence for religious beliefs were something that only the intellectually elite could acquire, then evidentialism would be a significant constraint on justified religious belief. Yet if even cognitively unsophisticated subjects can acquire evidence for their religious beliefs and do so independently of expert testimony, the potential truth of evidentialism isn't nearly as interesting.

Phenomenal conservatism says that a subject has evidence for P if it seems that P. Religious claims can seem true to cognitively unsophisticated subjects just as easily as they can seem true (false) to the intellectually elite. Given phenomenal conservatism, even cognitively unsophisticated subjects can have evidence for their religious convictions and they can have this evidence independently of expert testimony. Of the people who have religious convictions, I suspect that they often hold at least some of their convictions because they seem true. Phenomenal conservatism entails that those subjects have non-inferential evidence for (some of) their religious convictions, and presumably this non-inferential evidence is usually independent of expert testimony. Given plausible empirical claims, phenomenal conservatism entails that many people who have religious beliefs are such that they have testimony-independent, non-inferential evidence for at least some of their religious beliefs.

Even if someone grants these empirical claims, she may have the following concern.

Yes, if someone has religious experiences or seemings with religious content, then they could acquire evidence easily and evidentialism wouldn't impose a significant burden on those subjects. But what about those subjects who fail to have significant religious experiences of any sort? Wouldn't evidentialism impose a significant constraint on their religious beliefs?[32]

Suppose Barry is a subject who fails to have the seemings that would count as religious experiences. Either Barry has access to undefeated non-inferential testimonial evidence for his religious beliefs or he doesn't. If he does have such access,[33] then he can get evidence for his religious beliefs easily and evidentialism does not pose a significant obstacle to his having justified religious beliefs. If he doesn't have such access, then Barry may have a justified religious belief only if he has inferential evidence for it, and this may be a significant obstacle to his having justified religious beliefs. It does not follow, however, that this obstacle is posed *by evidentialism*. Suppose proper functionalism is true. It is plausible that our design plan allows us to form religious beliefs in only three ways: on the basis of religious experiences; on the basis of testimony; or on the basis of some sort of argument. Proper functionalism, given the above assumption about our design plan,

[32] Thanks to Sam Newlands for raising this concern.

[33] The phenomenal conservative might say that, when testimony gives us non-inferential evidence to believe the content of what was said, it is because the testimony triggers a seeming that the relevant content is true. Of course, testimony doesn't always have this effect. Sometimes someone tells us P, and it seems to us that the testifier is lying or is incompetent in the relevant subject matter.

would hold that Barry has a justified religious belief only if he has a good argument for it. A similar point could be made using most other non-evidentialisms.

Given phenomenal conservatism, subjects with religious seemings (however cognitively unsophisticated these subjects may be) can acquire evidence easily and independently of testimony. Those subjects who don't have religious seemings may need inferential evidence to have justified religious beliefs, and this may be a significant obstacle.[34] Yet this obstacle arises, not from evidentialism, but from some plausible thesis concerning which epistemic abilities (or sources of evidence) we actually have. Phenomenal conservatism may fail to make it easy for everyone to acquire evidence, but it doesn't follow that *evidentialism* imposes any significant obstacles to justified religious beliefs.

4.2 Given phenomenal conservatism, defeating defeaters is easy

Phenomenal conservatism makes it easy to have evidence for religious beliefs, at least for a wide range of subjects, including cognitively unsophisticated subjects who lack access to expert testimony. This point is crucial to showing that, given phenomenal conservatism, evidentialism doesn't impose a significant hurdle to justified religious belief. Yet it doesn't quite do the job by itself. Recall that evidentialists hold that one has propositional justification to believe P only if the subject doesn't have any relevant defeaters (i.e. the subject doesn't have any more inclusive body of evidence that fails to support P). One may concede that phenomenal conservatism makes it is easy to have evidence, but nonetheless insist that evidentialism is a significant hurdle because satisfying the no defeater condition can be a significant achievement. Stephen Wykstra, for example, argues (i) that an awareness of religious disagreement[35] constitutes a defeater for one's non-inferential religious beliefs and (ii) that this defeater can be defeated only if the subject has relevant *inferential* evidence.[36]

Wykstra holds that even if we have non-inferential evidence for some propositions, these propositions may 'come to need inferential evidence because our basic [i.e. non-inferential] faculties give us, as it were, conflicting signals about their truth.'[37] He asks us to suppose 'that my mother tells me one thing [P] and my father the contrary [~P].'[38] Wykstra's position is roughly as follows. He has non-inferential evidence for P in virtue of his mother's testimony; however, this evidence is defeated by his evidence for ~P which he has in virtue of his father's testimony. In light of his father's contrary testimony, he needs some *inferential* evidence to have a justified belief that P. Presumably, this inferential evidence must be further evidence for P or evidence that his

[34] I say that needing inferential evidence *may* be a significant obstacle because, given phenomenal conservatism, inferential evidence can come cheaply (see Section 4.3 below).

[35] By 'religious disagreement' I have in mind not only incompatible religious beliefs, but also experiences which (allegedly) support incompatible religious beliefs.

[36] 'Toward a Sensible Evidentialism: On the Notion of "Needing Evidence"' in William L. Rowe and William J. Wainwright (eds.), *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 3rd edn (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998).

[37] Ibid. 490.

[38] Ibid.

mother's testimony is more trustworthy than his father's. Likewise, in light of the contrary testimony of other religious traditions, religious believers need some inferential evidence to have justified religious beliefs.[39] Presumably, this inferential evidence must be further evidence for the truth of those religious beliefs or evidence that the subject's religious experiences are more trustworthy than those had within other religious traditions.

The problem with Wykstra's position here is his assumption that the additional evidence must be inferential: he says nothing in favor of this assumption, and his own analogy suggests that it is false. Suppose his mother says there is a cat in the next room and his father says there isn't. His brother then comes along and provides independent testimony that there is a cat in the room. The evidence provided by his brother's testimony is non-inferential by Wykstra's lights, and it seems sufficient to make Wykstra's total evidence support P rather than ~P, which suffices for propositional justification according to evidentialism. If it isn't clear yet that Wykstra would have justification, we can suppose that Wykstra acquires even stronger non-inferential evidence when he goes into the room and sees the cat for himself. With this further non-inferential evidence, Wykstra clearly has justification for believing that there is a cat in the next room, despite his father's contrary testimony. More generally, if one's non-inferential evidence is counterbalanced by contrary evidence, that tie can be broken by further non-inferential evidence.

Suppose that, for some subject, the non-inferential evidence provided by her religious experiences is initially counterbalanced by her awareness of religious disagreement. After thinking carefully about the matter, it might seem to her that her religious experiences are more reliable than those of competing religious traditions. In such a case, phenomenal conservatism says that she would have acquired non-inferential evidence for regarding her religious experiences as more reliable than those had within rival traditions. This additional evidence should be enough to break the tie and make her overall evidence support her religious beliefs.

Or suppose that after thinking carefully about the matter, it seems even more obvious to her that the relevant feature of her religious tradition is true. Given the plausible assumption that stronger seemings provide better evidence, this increase in the seeming's strength improves the subject's evidence for her religious tradition. This improvement in her evidence should be enough to break the tie and make her total evidence support her religious beliefs.[40]

[39] I have attributed to Wykstra the view that each individual religious believer needs inferential evidence for her religious beliefs. This may sound like a misinterpretation because, on p. 488, Wykstra insists that individual theists need not possess inferential evidence as long as it is 'available to the theistic community.' If he holds on to that claim, he must give up the above analogical argument. It is no good to Wykstra if there is some evidence 'available to the community' that his mother's testimony is more reliable: if he is to have a justified belief that P, he needs to possess that evidence.

[40] Plantinga makes a similar point without relying on phenomenal conservatism in his 'Pluralism: A Defense of Religious Exclusivism' in Thomas D. Senor (ed.), *Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1995).

Assuming that seemings really do provide genuine evidence, it is hard to see what more Wykstra would want. Of course, one may doubt that seemings do or at least always provide evidence. Or, more bluntly, one might insist that phenomenal conservatism provides an absurdly permissive account of evidence. I consider an objection along these lines in Section 5. Yet, *assuming* the truth of phenomenal conservatism, defeating the defeater posed by religious disagreement does *not* require acquiring inferential evidence of some sort.

We considered whether evidentialism would pose a significant hurdle to justified religious belief because satisfying the no defeater condition often will involve acquiring relevant inferential evidence. Yet given phenomenal conservatism, satisfying the no defeater condition is easy and doesn't require inferential evidence. Since phenomenal conservatism makes it easy to acquire evidence for religious beliefs and easy to satisfy the no defeater condition, it makes it easy to have justification whether or not evidentialism is true—at least it makes it easy for many subjects. If a subject fails to have the relevant seemings, then it may be hard for her to have justified religious beliefs. This difficulty, however, would not be posed by evidentialism; it would be posed by some plausible thesis concerning what epistemic abilities or sources of evidence a subject actually has. Hence, we have established the main point of this section, namely that, given phenomenal conservatism, evidentialism is not a significant hurdle to justified religious belief.

4.3 Wykstra's evidentialism

Even if phenomenal conservatism would make evidentialism insignificant *as it was defined above*, one might wonder whether there is some other plausible evidentialism that would remain significant even given phenomenal conservatism. In fact, Wykstra seems to think that he has identified such a view:

Wykstra's Evidentialism: S's religious belief that P is warranted only if there is inferential evidence available to S's religious community that P is true.[41]

Wykstra's Evidentialism is different in five respects from evidentialism, as it was defined in Section 1. First, Wykstra's Evidentialism is restricted only to the religious domain, not any domain whatsoever. Second, it concerns warrant, not (*ultima facie*) justification. Third, it lays down only a necessary condition on warrant, not a necessary and sufficient one. Fourth, it requires *inferential* evidence, whereas the earlier evidentialism simply required evidence, whether inferential or non-inferential. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Wykstra's evidentialism holds that *someone else*'s evidence might be relevant to whether *my* religious beliefs are warranted. My religious beliefs might be

[41] 'Toward a Sensible Evidentialism,' p. 488. Wykstra talks about what it takes to be 'free of deep epistemic defectiveness' rather than what it takes to have warrant. I don't really know what deep epistemic defectiveness is unless it is failing to have warrant or something in the neighborhood. I, therefore, treat Wykstra's evidentialism as a thesis about warrant.

warranted not because *I* have non-inferential evidence for them, but because someone else in my religious community has evidence for them. According to the evidentialism from Section 1, it is *my and only my* evidence that matters to the justification of my religious beliefs; what evidence *anyone else* has for my religious beliefs is totally irrelevant.

Given phenomenal conservatism, Wykstra's Evidentialism, as stated, wouldn't pose much of an obstacle to warranted religious beliefs. Suppose I endorse the following argument: if torturing for fun is morally wrong, then God exists; torturing for fun is morally wrong; therefore, God exists. Also suppose that my only evidence for the premises is that they seem true. In such a case, I would have *inferential* evidence that God exists, so this belief would satisfy Wykstra's Evidentialism. But this inferential evidence came so cheaply that Wykstra's Evidentialism doesn't seem to be a significant obstacle to warranted religious beliefs. I suspect that Wykstra did not intend for his evidentialism to be satisfied by just any inferential evidence, but I'm not sure what restriction he might have in mind (except perhaps the vague restriction that the argument should be more like those employed in natural theology). We don't need to sort out these interpretive matters here. Regardless of how broadly he wants to construe 'inferential evidence,' Wykstra's Evidentialism is dubious.

Wykstra supports his evidentialism with an analogy. We ordinary folk seem justified in believing in electrons in part because we (justifiably) take scientists to have excellent *inferential* evidence for this claim. Yet our belief would fail to have warrant if the scientists really didn't have such evidence. Wykstra allows that I can have a *justified* belief in electrons even if the experts failed to have good inferential evidence for their existence.[42] He contends, however, that the experts must have inferential evidence for me (and for them) to have a *warranted* belief in electrons. Likewise, Wykstra says, even if neither the experts in my religious community nor I need inferential evidence for my religious beliefs to be *justified*, the experts (or someone else in the religious community) must have inferential evidence for my religious beliefs to be *warranted*.

There is an obvious disanalogy between electron-beliefs and religious beliefs: we do not take ourselves to have (testimony-independent) non-inferential access to electrons, but (some) religious practitioners do take themselves to have such access to religious matters. This disanalogy provides a principled reason for saying that a warranted belief in electrons requires the experts to have inferential evidence for claims about electrons, but then denying that 'if theistic belief is to be free of deep epistemic defectiveness, it is essential that an evidential case be available to the theistic community.'[43]

For a belief to be warranted, we require that it have an appropriate causal history, but—and this is important—the standards for appropriateness vary according to how the belief is formed. Most of us believe in electrons on the basis of some expert testimony, so it is plausible that our belief is warranted only if the expert's belief is warranted. Since we

[42] 'Toward a Sensible Evidentialism,' pp. 485–6.

[43] Ibid. 488.

assume that scientists warrantedly believe that electrons exist only if they have inferential evidence for this claim, it is plausible that our belief in electrons is warranted only if scientists have inferential evidence for this claim.

Suppose, on the other hand, that we believe that dogs exist on the basis of it perceptually seeming that way. Insofar as this belief is based on an experience (e.g. a perceptual seeming) what matters is that the experience is caused in an appropriate way (e.g. by a properly functioning visual faculty), not that the experts have inferential evidence for those beliefs. Wykstra agrees that our perceptual beliefs can be warranted even if there is no relevant inferential evidence that is available to community. If we were to discover that no such inferential case exists, 'we would not consider our confidence that dogs exist to be in big doxastic trouble.'[44] What Wykstra fails to see, however, is that a parallel point holds for certain religious beliefs.

Some religious beliefs might be analogous to belief in electrons in that they are based on expert testimony. We might hold, then, that those religious beliefs are warranted only if the experts in the community have some inferential evidence that those beliefs are true. Yet, at least some religious beliefs are analogous to our perceptual beliefs: they are based on certain experiences (e.g. seemings), and insofar as they are based on those experiences what matters is that the experiences are caused in an appropriate way (e.g. by a properly functioning *sensus divinitatis*), not that the experts have inferential evidence for those beliefs.

I have argued that, if phenomenal conservatism is true, then the evidentialism from Section 1 fails to be significant constraint on *justified* religious belief. We considered whether Wykstra's Evidentialism might nonetheless pose a significant constraint on *warranted* religious beliefs, but his evidentialism is dubious. Insofar as our religious beliefs are based on religious experiences, we should hold that those beliefs are warranted only if those experiences are caused in some appropriate way. Since the availability of inferential evidence is irrelevant to whether these experiences are caused appropriately, we should deny that a religious belief is warranted only if there is some inferential evidence that is available to the subject's religious community.

5 Is phenomenal conservatism too permissive?

I suspect that, at this point in the paper, many readers are thinking, 'Sure, maybe it's the case that *were* phenomenal conservatism true, evidentialism wouldn't impose a significant requirement on justified religious beliefs. But who cares? Phenomenal conservatism makes it absurdly easy to acquire evidence!' This worry is only amplified when you consider two additional facts. First, phenomenal conservatism allows seemings to provide evidence for their content *no matter how they are caused*—even if they are caused by wishful thinking, paranoia, cognitive malfunction, etc. Second, it is widely assumed,

[44] Ibid. 485.

even by non-evidentialists, that evidence for P suffices for *prima facie* propositional justification for P (see Section 3.2 above). Since I think people will be even more worried by how cheap phenomenal conservatism makes *prima facie* justification than they are about how cheap it makes evidence, I will respond most directly to the worry that phenomenal conservatism makes *prima facie* justification absurdly cheap.

There are perhaps many ways in which one could press this worry, but I will focus on Peter Markie's way of pressing it.[45] Consider:

HEAVEN: After my physical death, I will undergo a bodily resurrection and then live a happy and meaningful life for all of eternity.

Suppose that HEAVEN seems true to Wishing Willy simply because he deeply desires and hopes it to be true and that he believes HEAVEN on the basis of this seeming. Markie considers it absurd to say that this wishfully-produced seeming provides Willy with *prima facie* propositional justification for HEAVEN.

The putative problem for phenomenal conservatism is not that it licenses every form of wishful thinking. It can allow that my wishfully-produced belief that P lacks even *prima facie* justification when my wanting P to be true causes that belief directly (and without the causal mediation of a seeming that P). Nor is the problem that phenomenal conservatism approves of wishfully-produced beliefs as they are typically formed. In most cases of wishful thinking, people have some reason to suspect that they are thinking wishfully and so have at least partial defeaters for their wishfully-produced beliefs. In the ordinary case, then, it is unclear whether phenomenal conservatism allows wishful thinking to provide *ultima facie* justification. The alleged problem, though, is that phenomenal conservatism allows a wishfully-produced seeming to produce *prima facie* justification when it can't.

This objection notices an important fact about Willy's belief in HEAVEN: even if we stipulate that Willy has no relevant defeaters, his belief is clearly defective. If phenomenal conservatism is worth taking seriously, it needs some plausible explanation for why Willy's belief seems (and is) defective. The natural strategy for the phenomenal conservative is to distinguish between *prima facie* propositional justification, which Willy's belief has according to PC, and some other epistemic status which Willy's belief does not have. This strategy, if employed properly, would allow the phenomenal conservative to say that Willy's belief seems intuitively bad, not because it fails to have even *prima facie* justification (because it does have that property), but because it lacks this other epistemic status. This is precisely the strategy that I will pursue.

[45] 'Mystery of Perceptual Justification,' p. 356–7 and 'Epistemically Appropriate Perceptual Belief,' pp. 119–20. Alvin Goldman explicitly endorses Markie's objection in his 'Immediate Justification and Process Reliabilism' in Quentin Smith (ed.), *Epistemology: New Essays* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), sec 4. Similar objections appear in Michael Bergmann's 'Externalist Justification and the Role of Appearances' (manuscript) and Susanna Siegel's 'Cognitive Penetrability and Perceptual Justification', *Nous* (forthcoming).

My version of this strategy relies on a certain way of distinguishing between non-inferential justification and non-inferential warrant, where warrant is the property enough of which makes true belief knowledge. The proponent of phenomenal conservatism, it seems to me, should say that non-inferential justification is the property a proposition has when believing it is an appropriate response to an experience, whether that experience is caused appropriately or not. Justification is a necessary condition on warrant (or so I assume for the sake of this paper), so non-inferential warrant requires one's belief to be an appropriate response to experience; however, non-inferential warrant additionally requires that the experience be caused in some appropriate way.

One virtue of this way of distinguishing between non-inferential justification and warrant is its ability to explain the appeal of the new evil demon objection to reliabilism.[46] Suppose there is a mental duplicate of you. This person will have all the same beliefs and experiences as you,[47] and these beliefs and experiences will be organized in the same way as yours. If you believe that you are sitting in front of a computer on the basis of its perceptually seeming that you are sitting in front of a computer, the duplicate believes that he is sitting in front of the computer on the basis of its perceptually seeming that he is so situated.

Unfortunately, your duplicate is the victim of an evil demon's systematic deception. While your perceptual beliefs are mostly true, those of your duplicate are mostly false. Your perceptual seemings and beliefs are formed in a reliable way; your duplicate's are not. Certain versions of reliabilism entail that you have considerably more non-inferential justification than your duplicate; however, there is a widespread intuition that both you and your duplicate have exactly the same degree of non-inferential justification. Even some reliabilists try to identify versions of reliabilism that can accommodate this intuition.[48]

How does the above distinction explain the appeal of the new evil demon objection? Although a demon victim's experiences are caused in an *in*appropriate way, namely by the machinations of some demon, they still can provide non-inferential justification for believing ordinary perceptual claims. No one claims, of course, that these demon-caused experiences can make one's ordinary perceptual beliefs warranted. Intuitively, demon-caused experiences can't make a belief warranted even though they can make a belief justified. Why is this so? The proposed distinction between

[46] Stewart Cohen presses this objection in his 'Justification and Truth' (1984), *Philosophical Studies* 46, pp. 279–95.

[47] Strictly speaking, it is likely impossible for there to be a duplicate with exactly the same beliefs and experiences as you. It is generally acknowledged that a duplicate's beliefs and experiences would have the same phenomenal character as yours, but they will sometimes have a different content. Take indexical beliefs, for example: your belief 'I am a philosopher' has a different content than your duplicate's belief that 'I am a philosopher.' These differences are generally ignored, as they make little difference to the force of the new evil demon objection.

[48] See, e.g., Comesaña's 'Reliabilist Evidentialism' and David Henderson and Terry Horgan, 'Transglobal Reliabilism' (2006), *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 17, pp. 171–95.

non-inferential justification and warrant provides an appealing answer: the demon victim's beliefs are justified because they are appropriate responses to her seemings, but they aren't warranted because her seemings, unbeknownst to her, were caused in an inappropriate way.

When combined with phenomenal conservatism, this way of distinguishing between non-inferential justification and warrant holds that Willy's belief is justified (because it is an appropriate response to his seeming that HEAVEN is true) but not warranted (because the seeming is caused by wishful thinking). The intuitive badness of Willy's belief is explained by the belief's failing to have any warrant at all. I find this result intuitively satisfactory, but perhaps others will insist that there is some relevant difference between demon-produced seemings, on the one hand, and wishfully-produced seemings, on the other.

It is natural to suggest there is a relevant difference because Willy is *responsible* for his inappropriately caused seeming and the demon victim isn't. In reply, it is easy to imagine a demon victim case in which the subject *is* responsible for her demon-caused experiences. Perhaps Weirdo had always wanted to be a demon-victim, and he paid, even begged a demon to make all his perceptual experiences delusional, such that he would never remember having told the demon to do so. Thus, Weirdo would be responsible for his delusional experiences because of some *past* actions; however, he *now* has reason to believe neither that his experiences are demon-induced, nor that he is responsible for their being demon-induced. In such a case, it still seems that those perceptual experiences would non-inferentially justify Weirdo's perceptual beliefs.

If perceptual experiences can provide non-inferential justification when, unbeknownst to the subject they are demon-caused *and* he is responsible for them being demon-caused, why can't a seeming that P produce non-inferential justification when, unbeknownst to the subject, that seeming was produced by wishful thinking *and* that subject is responsible for that wishful thinking? There don't seem to be any such reasons; therefore, being produced by wishful thinking does not prevent a seeming from providing justification for some claim. More generally, we should affirm that the cause of a seeming, by itself, has no bearing on the ability of that seeming to provide non-inferential justification (or evidence), even though it has much to do with the ability of that seeming to produce non-inferential warrant.[49]

6 Conclusion

If you've read this far, you've traveled a long road, so let me remind you of where you've been. The main goal of this paper was to apply phenomenal conservatism to religious belief with the aim of establishing two main theses. The first was that phenomenal conservatism is better suited than is proper functionalism to explain

[49] I defend my reply to Markie's objection at greater length in my 'Why Open-Minded People Should Endorse Dogmatism,' sec. 6.

how an appreciation of the glories of nature leads to justified religious beliefs. I argued that the phenomenal conservative's explanation was superior because only it avoided the counterintuitive claim that a visual image of a sunset can evidentially support the claim that God loves one (Section 3). The second thesis was that, if phenomenal conservatism is true, then a certain type of evidentialism fails to provide a significant obstacle to justified religious belief. I argued that, since phenomenal conservatism makes evidence so cheap, it makes it easy to acquire justified religious beliefs for a wide range of subjects, including cognitively unsophisticated ones with no access to expert testimony (Sections 4.1–2). This discussion naturally raised two questions: is there some other type of evidentialism that would pose a significant obstacle to epistemically valuable religious belief even if phenomenal conservatism were true? And does phenomenal conservatism make it *too* easy to acquire evidence? To partially answer the first question, we considered Wykstra's Evidentialism about warranted religious belief, but his evidentialism was dubious and it wasn't even clear that it would pose such an obstacle (Section 4.3). To partially answer the second question, we considered whether phenomenal conservatism was too permissive because it allows seemings to provide evidence and *prima facie* justification no matter how they are caused. After considering an analogy with the new evil demon objection to reliabilism, we concluded that inappropriately-caused seemings might provide *prima facie* justification (and evidence), even though they can't provide warrant (Section 5).[50]

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