**Dogmatism and the Epistemology of Covert Selection**

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**1. Introduction**

You and I are walking down the street. You look where you are going—straight ahead—because you don’t want to run into anyone. My desire for dessert causes me to look left at the window of the pastry shop. Here my desire’s influence on experience is *overt cognitive selection*. It is **selection** insofar as my desire influences the character and content of my experience by influencing my attention. It is **cognitive** insofar as the state doing the influencing, namely the desire, is a cognitive state. In philosophy, it is typical to count at least the following things as cognitive states: beliefs, desires, moods, experiences, emotions, preferences, expectations, and concept possession. The influence is **overt** insofar as the desire’s mediate influence on attention occurs by influencing the position and orientation of my body, especially my sensory organs.

I now look ahead, eyes front and center, but my desire for dessert continues to influence my perceptual experience. In my peripheral vision (and with my eyes facing straight ahead), I continue to linger on those marvelous pastries. My desire’s influence is now an instance of **covert selection.** It is **covert** insofar as the desire’s mediate influence on attention does *not* occur by influencing the position and orientation of my body, including my sensory organs.

My nearly overwhelming desire for dessert has one final influence on my experience before I distractedly walk into a pole. While lingering on the pastries in my peripheral vision, my desire for pastry causes my experience to represent those pastries as closer than they actually are. Here the desire’s influence—if such influence is even compatible with our actual hardwiring—counts as *cognitive penetration*. Again, the desire’s influence would be cognitive because a cognitive state is having the influence. It is **penetration** insofar as the desire’s influence would be, in some hard to specify sense, direct.

To be direct is to be unmediated. If our desires influence our experience at all, there is presumably some sort of processing that mediates the influence our desires have on our experience. For it to be an interesting question of whether our cognitive states penetrate our experience, the relevant sort of directness must be compatible with some kinds of mediation; otherwise, it will be *very* easy to show that our cognitive states don’t penetrate our experience.

Influence mediated by *overt* selection is uncontroversially *in*direct (cf. Gross 2017, 3); insofar as some influence is overt (cognitive[[1]](#footnote-1)) selection, it is *not* penetration. It is controversial, however, whether influence mediated by *covert* selection is direct in the relevant sense, and thus it isn’t clear what the relationship is between penetration and covert selection. The disparate accounts of covert attention’s (and so covert selection’s) ontology only make the relationship more obscure.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Suppose that your perceptual experience represents that the black guy is holding a gun, where the experience results from prejudiced overt selection, covert selection, or penetration. How, if at all, would these prejudicial influences affect whether it is rational to believe what your experience tells you? With respect to evaluating the rationality of believing what your experience tells you, does it matter which of the three kinds of influence is at issue?

This chapter explores these questions by considering the implications of *covert* selection for a controversial but popular position in epistemology, misleadingly labeled “perceptual dogmatism.” Perceptual dogmatism holds, roughly, that a perceptual experience is always evidence that its representational content is true. If your perceptual experience represents that the black guy is holding a gun, then the experience is evidence that the black guy is holding a gun. Indeed, perceptual dogmatism holds that it is evidence that he is holding a gun no matter how it is caused. If cognitive selection or penetration of an experience can make a difference to whether the experience is evidence, then perceptual dogmatism is false.

Overt selection (in the guise of bad searches for evidence) and cognitive penetration pose well-known challenges to perceptual dogmatism.[[3]](#footnote-3) The myriad accounts of *covert* attention’s metaphysics make one (at least, they made me) wonder whether it raises a distinctive challenge to dogmatism, one that is importantly different from the challenges that dogmatism already faces. Epistemological issues concerning covert selection cannot be entirely divorced from the metaphysical ones (e.g., in §5 below); however, I argue that no matter how the metaphysical issues get sorted, covert selection fails to provide a distinctive challenge to dogmatism. This chapter is good news for dogmatists. The fewer distinct challenges to dogmatism there are, the more likely a dogmatist can resolve them all.

For those who couldn’t care less about dogmatism, you’ll be relieved to hear that what I have to say is of broader interest. For psychologists, perceptual dogmatism is a natural place to begin thinking about epistemology. The view is simple and intuitive, and yet it is connected to many major disputes in epistemology. By exploring how dogmatism can be challenged, you will be introduced to the field of epistemology. For philosophers, the epistemology of covert attention is a relatively new area with no established positions or overarching framework. A clear exposition of how covert attention is related (or not) to a prominent position in epistemology is a natural place to begin understanding the epistemic significance of covert selection. By the end of the chapter, we will have considered a variety of ways in which covert selection might be epistemically significant.

In §2, I explain (perceptual) dogmatism and the jargon needed to state it more precisely. In §3, I explain how cognitive penetration raises a significant challenge to dogmatism. In §4, I explain how overt selection raises a distinct, significant challenge to dogmatism. The goal in these early sections is to identify a working idea of how covert selection would have to challenge dogmatism, if it is to be importantly different from dogmatism’s other challenges.

The remaining two sections of the chapter admit that covert selection can raise various challenges for dogmatism, but they contend that the challenges are ones that dogmatism already faces. In §5, I argue that, if covert selection poses a direct challenge to dogmatism’s truth (i.e., if it provides evidence that dogmatism is false), it will collapse into the challenge posed by either cognitive penetration or overt selection. In §6, I consider whether covert selection might raise a new worry for an explanatory ambition of typical dogmatists. If so, then covert selection would pose an *in*direct challenge for dogmatism, removing a common motivation for the view. I concede that covert selection can raise such a challenge but, even here, the challenge is not new.

**2. Perceptual Dogmatism**

*2.1. Defining Perceptual Dogmatism*

Epistemologists like to annoy people, so they invented a technical phrase “X has justification to believe” that is roughly equivalent to more everyday locutions, such as “it is reasonable for X to believe” and “it is rational for X to believe”. So understood, justification is a less demanding status than knowledge. It is usually assumed, for example, that you can have justification to believe something false but that you can’t know something false. You might justifiably, or reasonably, believe that Chuck died in a plane crash on the basis of reliable news reports and footage of the crash; however, if he miraculously survived, then you don’t know that he died in the plane crash.

Some epistemologists like to show off their Latin, so they invented another technical term “prima facie justification”. For something to be a *prima facie justification* to believe P is, roughly, for it to be (a piece of) evidence that supports believing P. Some prima facie justifications are stronger than others, because some pieces of evidence are stronger than others. And sometimes the counterevidence is stronger than the evidence. In such a case, we say that our prima facie justification is *defeated*. Mike’s fingerprints on the bloody knife may be evidence that he did it; however, such evidence might be defeated by a massive body of counterevidence, including surveillance videos, wiretapped conversations, eyewitness testimony, and Ike’s guilty confession that he framed Mike because Mike “stole” his girlfriend.

Prima facie justification and (unqualified) justification are closely linked. The “prima facie” functions as a qualifier, or a caveat. You have justification to believe something when it is prima facie justified and one further condition is met: you have no (sufficiently strong) defeaters, or counterevidence.[[4]](#footnote-4) Prima facie justification is evidence; justification is *un*defeated evidence.

There was lots of evidence for Newtonian physics’ truth, and arguably before Einstein this evidence justified people in believing that Newtonian physics is true. Now, however, there is lots of evidence that Newtonian physics is strictly false no matter how well it works as an approximation. Before Einstein, physicists had both prima facie justification and (unqualified) justification for believing Newtonian physics; afterward they have prima facie justification but *not* (unqualified) justification to believe it. Since they now lack justification to believe it, it is ordinarily assumed that it would be unreasonable or irrational for them to believe it.

This chapter focuses on a particular claim about the relationship between perceptual experiences and what we have justification to believe. Suppose you have a perceptual experience that represents as true that there is a book in front of you, and suppose that the experience is the only potentially relevant consideration you have concerning whether P is true. Should you *dis*believe that there is a book in front of you or withhold judgment—i.e., resist both belief and disbelief—about the matter? Presumably not. After all, the only potentially relevant consideration bearing on the matter is that you seem to see a book! You apparently have prima facie justification, or evidence, to believe that the book is there. And since we’ve stipulated that you have no counterevidence, you are justified in believing that the book is there.

There is nothing special about experiences of *books* or special about *your* experiences. We can generalize. The reasoning[[5]](#footnote-5) from the previous paragraph leads to the following general theory about the relation between perceptual experience and prima facie justification:

**(Perceptual) Dogmatism:** Necessarily, if S has a perceptual experience that P, then S has prima facie justification for believing P.

In other words, your perceptual experience that P is evidence that P is true, and as long as you have no relevant defeaters/counterevidence, it is reasonable to believe that P is true. Since I want you to like this view, it is counterproductive to refer to it as ‘dogmatism.’ Who wants to endorse anything associated with *dogmatism*? I didn’t coin the term. Just keep in mind that it doesn’t refer to a stubborn adherence to some doctrine; instead it refers to a widely endorsed thesis concerning the relation between perceptual experience and prima facie justification.[[6]](#footnote-6)

*2.2. Perceptual Dogmatism versus Naïve Realism*

Granot, Jones, and Balcetis attack a position they call “naïve realism” (this volume). Since both perceptual dogmatism and naïve realism are theses about perceptual experience, readers of this volume may wonder about their relationship. In the rest of this section, I explain naïve realism, how an attack on naïve realism might motivate an objection to perceptual dogmatism, and why Granot, *et al*’s attack fails.

Naïve realism has two components: “[(i)] our perceptual experiences are unaffected by biases and therefore, [(ii)] true representations of what we lay our eyes on” (this volume, XX13). (i) is a claim about a perceptual experience’s causal history: the causal processes that produce perceptual experience do not systematically privilege any information with regard to how quickly it was processed, how frequently it was processed, or how intensely it valences an emotional display (e.g., moderately happy vs very happy). (ii) is a claim about the accuracy of perceptual experience’s content: all contents of the experience are accurate.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Naïve realism, then, is a claim about the causal history and accuracy of perceptual experience. It is descriptive rather than evaluative. To be sure, the term “bias” is often used as a negative evaluation. But that is not the way that Granot, *et al* characterize it in their chapter (XX9). Whether perceptual processing is biased, as they characterize it, is just the question of whether certain inputs get certain kinds of priority in the perceptual processing. It is a separate question whether, for example, it is good or rational for these inputs to have these kinds of priority.

Perceptual dogmatism, in contrast, is an evaluative claim. In saying that perceptual experiences count as evidence no matter what, perceptual dogmatism is saying that it is *rational* (a positive evaluation) to trust them in the absence of countervailing considerations. I will make the relatively uncontroversial assumption that the accuracy of a perceptual experience—the truth/falsity of naïve-realism’s second component—makes no difference to whether an experience counts as evidence. In other words, it can be rational to rely on inaccurate perceptual experiences. Your perceptual experience misrepresents the Mueller-Lyer display such that one horizontal line is represented as longer than the other. Before you discovered that your experience is illusory, it was presumably rational for you to believe that one line is longer than the other. (Also, see the discussion of the mad scientist cases in the next section.)

Perceptual dogmatism claims that any bias in the causal history is *irrelevant* to the rationality of trusting your experience—except insofar as those biases affect what kinds of counterevidence you might have. In other words, perceptual dogmatism claims that naïve realism’s first component is also irrelevant to the rationality of trusting your experience. Here critics of dogmatism disagree. If these critics are correct, then any evidence against naïve realism’s first component may underwrite the following sort of objection to dogmatism: (1) there actually are various kinds of cognitive penetration and/or selection (as demonstrated by the alleged empirical evidence); (2) it isn’t rational to trust experience when it is penetrated and/or selected in those ways (as the critics may insist); therefore, (3) it isn’t always rational to trust your experience and, thus, perceptual dogmatism is false.

There’s good news and bad news for Granot, *et al*. The good news is that the problems with their attack on naïve realism do not afflict the broader goals of their chapter. They provide an impressively diverse range of evidence for the claim that *perceptual judgments*[[8]](#footnote-8)are the result of bias and, consequently, are sometimes inaccurate and/or misleading. Potential biases in the perceptual judgments of judges and juries would be enough to show that video evidence is not the panacea it is often made out to be. Conscientious legal judgments made on the basis of video evidence may very well be biased, inaccurate, and unjust. It is to Granot, *et al*’s credit that they warn us of this danger.

The bad news is that there is a gap in Granot, *et al*’s arguments against naïve realism. Their empirical evidence generally concerns which perceptual *judgments* subjects make and which they don’t make.[[9]](#footnote-9) Yet, naïve realism, as they defined it, is a claim about perceptual *experience*.

I take it that Granot, *et al* make two assumptions throughout the paper, which are supposed close the gap. First, they apparently assume that, in the cases that they discuss, inaccuracy or bias at the level of judgment is best explained by a matching inaccuracy or bias at the level of perceptual experience. The first assumption seems very plausible in some cases and questionable in others. Consider the fingerprint identification example in which background information made a difference to whether the fingerprints were judged to be a match. Granot, *et al* assume that this difference in judgment is due to a difference in what the experts *saw*. But why is that assumption better than the distinct empirical hypothesis that the difference in judgment is due, not to what was seen, but what was inferred? They don’t say.

The second assumption is that a visual experience misrepresents whenever it fails to represent everything that is one’s visual field or “parts of what is really out there” (XX20). This assumption is questionable in most, if not all, the cases they have in mind. Suppose I say, “Obama was a US President,” but I don’t mention that he was indeed the first black US President. What I said was accurate as far as it went, even if my failure to say more was somehow misleading in a given context. Suppose that a cop’s perceptual experience represents a black guy as having something in his hand but the experience does *not* represent what is in the hand. If the black guy is holding a cell phone, the experience did not thereby misrepresent the black guy, what he was holding, or the visual scene. The experience was accurate as far as it went, even it misleads the cop and tragic consequences follow. Due to the processing limitations mentioned by Granot, *et al*, one might expect that we are consciously experiencing only a (biased) sample of what there is to experience in the scene. And if our experience isn’t representing some aspect of the scene, it can’t *mis*represent that aspect either.[[10]](#footnote-10)

To be clear, I am not claiming that naïve realism is true. I am claiming only that Granot, *et al*’s attack on naïve realism fails because they did not justify the leap from *evidence concerning what judgments subjects (don’t) make* to *conclusions concerning what subjects’ perceptual experiences (don’t) represent*. It is unclear, then, whether they’ve provided much empirical evidence that perceptual experience (as opposed to judgment) is cognitively penetrated and/or selected. Yet, as we’ll see in the next section, perceptual dogmatism isn’t off the hook if naïve realism is actually true. The mere possibility that biases can affect our perceptual experiences is enough to raise interesting challenges to dogmatism.

**3. The Cognitive Penetration Challenge**

*3.1. The Challenge’s Distinctive Issue*

Philosophy is more fun than science. Science requires tedious experiments and lots of waiting around for the results. Note the term “necessarily” at the beginning of dogmatism’s definition. Typical philosophical theories are such that, if they are true, they are true necessarily, i.e. no matter what. No matter whether human beings exist. No matter what the laws of nature are. No matter what. And this means that we can gain philosophical understanding just by thinking about stories or watching movies or imagining wild scenarios. At least, thinking about such things can lead to philosophical understanding so long as the story is possible. Because if it’s possible and a philosophical theory is incorrect in the story, then it’s incorrect period. If the theory is true, then it’s true no matter what.

Science may have a central place in philosophy. Perhaps the leading scientific theories should constrain philosophical theorizing in various ways. Yet insofar as philosophy is concerned with what is true no matter what, it must go beyond what science tells us about the way things are—even beyond what science tells us about the laws of nature. As we assess the case for dogmatism, then, we needn’t limit ourselves to what science has demonstrated about the actual causes and contents of perceptual experience.

Dogmatism is an equal opportunity employer: it doesn’t discriminate perceptual experiences on the basis of their causal history. In the absence of relevant counterevidence, it says that a perceptual experience provides justification to believe its content *no matter how it is caused*. In some cases, this looks like the correct result. Suppose that, unbeknownst to you, a mad scientist uses a computer to generate your perceptual experiences so flawlessly that they feel genuine (e.g., you are in the Matrix or an *Inception* dream). This is not a good causal history for your experience to have, but as long as you (reasonably) have no idea that they are computer generated, it is widely assumed that you have justification to believe what your experiences tell you. In fact, the mad scientist tricks you *by* capitalizing on your rationality (Kelly 2014, §2). He knows that reasonable people believe what their perceptual experiences tell them unless they have a good reason not to.

In other cases, dogmatism’s policy of anti-discrimination looks mistaken. Suppose that Wishful Willy’s perceptual experience represents the rock as a gold nugget only because he is overwhelmed by a desire to be rich. Or suppose that Jill has an irrational belief that Jack is angry and that this belief causes her experience to represent Jack’s neutral expression as angry. Even if Willy and Jill have no idea that their cognitive states are influencing their perceptual experience, it seems *ir*rational for Willy and Jill to believe what their experience tells them. These cases seem to be counterexamples to dogmatism.

If you find it hard to believe that Willy and Jill could have no idea that their experiences were influenced by their desire and fear, respectively, then so much the better for dogmatism. We may not get a counterexample at all. For then we can explain why they lack justification to believe the content of their experience by appealing to a defeater, namely their awareness of the experiences’ poor causal history. For the sake of the chapter, we can just play along with the assumptions needed by those objecting to dogmatism.

Since the Willy and Jill cases are generally assumed to involve cognitive penetration, we’ll call this challenge to dogmatism **the Cognitive Penetration Challenge**.[[11]](#footnote-11) This challenge is even more interesting if cognitive penetration is compatible with the hardwiring human beings actually have; however, its force as an objection to dogmatism requires only that such cases be possible.

The ultimate goal is to show that covert selection doesn’t raise any new challenge to dogmatism that dogmatism doesn’t already face. I’ll err on the side of giving overly narrow construals of the distinctive issues raised by the existing challenges. This will make my job harder by making it easier for covert selection to raise a distinct challenge.

We criticize inferences for a wide variety of reasons, including that one lacks adequate justification to believe the premises, the inference amounts to a hasty generalization, the inference neglects a base rate, and so on. These criticisms betray an expectation that our inferences respect what we can call “inferential norms.” Proponents of cognitive penetration challenges claim that the subpersonal processing that causes our experiences must also respect such familiar inferential norms, or at least analogous ones. When subpersonal processing violates these norms, the objector says that the violation, contra dogmatism, can prevent an experience from providing providing prima facie justification for its content. More carefully, what’s distinctive about the Cognitive Penetration Challenge is that it raises the question of whether (i) cognitive influence via *an unbroken series of subpersonal processing* can prevent an experience from providing prima facie justification for its content[[12]](#footnote-12) when (ii) some part of the processing violates an inferential(-like) norm. Dogmatism says that it can’t; our intuitions say that it can.

You won’t need a deep understanding of Cognitive Penetration’s distinctive issue. Feel free to skip to the next section if you already get the gist of it. In the remainder of the present section, I provide some clarification and defense.

*3.2. The Distinctive Issue Clarified*

If A cognitively penetrates B, then A must cause B via an *unbroken* series of *processing*. Macpherson’s (2012, 26) migraine case shows the need for such conditions. Suppose that Fiona believes that she has a test tomorrow. This belief causes her to be anxious, the anxiety results in certain (mere) chemical changes, and the chemical changes trigger spotty vision of the sort associated with migraines. The test belief influences the character and content of Fiona’s visual experience, but at least one link in the causal chain (the mere chemical changes) doesn’t count as processing.[[13]](#footnote-13) Consequently, no one regards this case as an example of cognitive penetration. And even if we stipulate that Fiona’s test belief is entirely irrational, no one alleges that the test belief’s influence is one that prevents the resulting experience from providing prima facie justification for its content. The Cognitive Penetration Challenge, then, depends on the relevant causal influence involving an unbroken chain of processing between the penetrating state and the penetrated experience.

The relevant processing must also be subpersonal. A human person has many proper parts, including fingers and toes. *Subpersonal* properties and processes are properties and processes of a person’s parts. Sometimes a subpersonal property/process suffices for a *person-level* property/process. If Bill’s head is bald, then Bill is bald. Yet some properties and processes are *merely subpersonal*. My parts, in other words, have some properties that I don’t have and they do some things that I don’t do. For example, one of my parts is an odd-looking nose. I may be odd-looking, but at least I’m not a nose. Arguably, much of perceptual and cognitive processing is merely subpersonal in this sense. Some part of my brain may use a certain process to fill in the optic disk gap, but I arguably do not perform this process. On the other hand, some properties and processes may be *merely person-level*. Perhaps whenever I desire coffee, there is no proper part of me that also desires coffee.

My suggestion is that the cognitive penetration challenge applies when there is an unbroken series of subpersonal processing from a cognitive state to, e.g., my experience. This is narrow insofar as merely person-level processing is excluded. It is not so narrow, however, that it excludes subpersonal processing which also counts as person-level processing/inference. McGrath (2013, especially §5) insists that, for penetration to affect the justificatory power of an experience, the transition from the cognitive state to the experience must be *person-level*. But he doesn’t deny that the “inferential norm violation” occurs also at the subpersonal level. While I’ve construed the Cognitive Penetration Challenge narrowly, it still is broad enough to capture all existing cognitive penetration challenges to dogmatism.

**4. The Bad Search Challenge**

*Overt* attention raises a familiar challenge to the idea that undefeated evidence suffices for justification. The basic idea is that undefeated evidence can fail to provide justification when that body of evidence is the result of a bad search for evidence. The bad search can prevent what would otherwise be evidence that justifies believing proposition P from, in fact, justifying P. Standard examples of bad searches involve bad distributions of *overt* attention (e.g., focusing on one part of the minority candidate’s job application—the part that contains the applicant’s weakest credentials—when one should have turned the page and considered a different part of the application). These bad search objections can directly challenge dogmatism. A person’s irrational belief that black people are more violent may affect the way he overtly attends to a given stimulus, making it more likely that his experience (mis)represents the black person as carrying a gun. Some will argue that the biased distribution of attention prevents *an experience that represents the black person as having a gun* from providing prima facie justification for the claim that *the black person has a gun*.

It’s worth stressing that a subject’s merely *being biased* toward (not) believing P is not sufficient for a search for evidence to be bad. Nor is it sufficient to prevent what would otherwise be justifying evidence for believing P from, in fact, justifying my belief in P. I’m biased toward believing positive things about my children. It simply does not follow that every positive thing I believe about my children is the result of such a bias. I might know *that my son just scored the winning goal* despite having some tendency to believe positive things about my children even when they aren’t true.

Bias threatens (prima facie) justification only when it has some, perhaps indirect, influence on what we believe. In this section, we are focused on cases in which the bias affects what one experiences (and so what one believes) *by* affecting how one acts, in particular how one searches for evidence. We should also assume in these cases that the subject is reasonably unaware that her experience is the result of a biased search. Otherwise, we can explain the lack of justification by appealing to a defeater—awareness of the biased search—rather than the biased search itself.

**The Bad Search Challenge** to dogmatism claims that when a perceptual experience is the result of a bad search (bad distribution of overt attention), then, contra dogmatism, the experience may fail to provide prima facie justification for its content. I contend that the challenge’s distinctive issue concerns the relation between the practical (what to do/what action to perform) and the epistemic (what to believe).

Where to search for evidence, how long to search, and the manner in which to search are subject to practical considerations, such as the importance of finding out the truth, the costs of further searching, legal and moral constraints on one’s search, etc. The example concerning the evaluation of job applications raises many of these practical considerations. Epistemic considerations also matter for searches.[[14]](#footnote-14) Whether I ought to continue searching for evidence is affected by how much justification I have that further searching may turn up evidence against my current belief that P (cf. Siegel 2017a, 167). But epistemic considerations cannot make a search bad by themselves. If it’s a trivial matter whether P is true, and my kid needs to be rushed to the hospital, then it would be insane to continue searching for evidence concerning P, given some chance that further searching would yield evidence that P is false.

If a search for evidence isn’t bad, it’s hard see why it would prevent otherwise perfectly good evidence from justifying what it would otherwise justify. It’s hard to see why my failure to further scrutinize my belief that P should have any bearing on whether the belief is justified or reasonable, when that failure is due to me rushing my kids to the hospital. If anything, it is the *quality* of a search that is relevant to whether the resulting experience justifies what it would ordinarily justify.

And if the quality of a search is relevant to whether the resulting experience justifies what it would ordinarily justify, then practical considerations matter epistemically.[[15]](#footnote-15) The quality of a search is always due to the interaction of both practical and epistemic factors. We can always change the quality of the search just by changing the stakes. If my kids are fine and P is all-important, then it would be bad to not search for more evidence concerning whether P is true.

The Bad Search Challenge assumes that the quality of a search partly determines whether the resulting experience provides prima facie justification for its content. Practical considerations partly determine the quality of the search. Thus we reach the distinctive issue raised by the challenge, namely *that practical considerations partly determine whether an experience provides prima facie justification for believing its content*. Bad search challenges, in other words, appeal to some version of what has been called *pragmatic encroachment*: very crudely put, what you ought to believe is partially determined by practical considerations, such as the importance of finding out the truth on the matter in question.[[16]](#footnote-16),[[17]](#footnote-17)Dogmatism is incompatible with this sort of pragmatic encroachment, because it holds that experiences provide prima facie justification no matter what practical considerations are at play.

We’ve been trying to understand the existing challenges to dogmatism, so that we can better understand whether covert selection offers a distinctive challenge to dogmatism, one that is importantly different from existing challenges. To avoid collapsing into the Cognitive Penetration Challenge, a covert selection challenge must not appeal to subpersonal violations of inferential(-like) norms. To avoid collapsing into the Bad Search Challenge, it must not appeal to pragmatic encroachment. In the next section, I argue that covert selection challenges don’t directly challenge dogmatism’s truth without collapsing into one of these other two challenges. In section 6, I consider whether covert selection can indirectly challenge dogmatism by challenging an explanatory ambition of typical dogmatists. While I concede that it can challenge the relevant ambition, the challenge is not new. Together, these sections argue that covert selection raises no new (direct or indirect) challenge for dogmatism.

**5. No New Direct Challenge**

I’ll now argue that covert selection doesn’t pose a direct challenge to dogmatism without collapsing into the Cognitive Penetration or Bad Search Challenges. Which existing challenge it collapses into depends on which metaphysics of covert selection we assume. Existing accounts of covert selection’s metaphysics make covert selection analogous to (i) cognitive penetration and/or inference, or (ii) overt selection and/or action. In 5.1, I argue that any challenge to dogmatism posed by the former will collapse into the Cognitive Penetration Challenge. In 5.2, I argue that any challenge to dogmatism posed by the latter will collapse into the Bad Search Challenge.

*5.1. Covert Selection as Inference-Like*

If covert selection raises a distinct challenge to dogmatism, covert selection would need to be a different kind of thing than cognitive penetration. Insofar as they are the same kind of processing, they are subject to the same epistemic norms. Imagine someone saying, “Covert selection just is cognitive penetration, but we should treat them differently when we do epistemology.” This different treatment would seem arbitrary or nonsensical. Mole provides a real world example of someone who treats covert selection and penetration as having a unified metaphysics and epistemology (2015, 225, 236). He is explicit that covert selection is a “variety of cognitive penetration” (Mole 2015, 236), and he implies that the epistemologies of cognitive penetration and covert selection are more or less the same (see especially 225).

Of course, different kinds of cognitive penetration may be subject to different epistemic norms. The Cognitive Penetration Challenge specifically requires that the problem for dogmatism be caused by subpersonal violations of inference-like norms. Perhaps some kinds of cognitive penetration (those that count as covert selection) are problematic in a way that is not explicable by appealing to anything like the epistemic norms we apply to inferences. Will this suggestion lead to a distinctive challenge from covert selection?

We need to be careful here, lest we trivialize what it means to refer to something as a *covert selection challenge*, or achallenge *from covert selection*. Consider the bi-fold suggestion that (i) the causal history of our experience needs to be reliable in a way that our inferences don’t need to be reliable,[[18]](#footnote-18) and (ii) when covert selection causes an experience to be unreliable in the relevant way, it prevents the experience from providing prima facie justification to believe its content. At first glance, this suggestion may seem to raise a challenge to dogmatism importantly different than the narrowly construed Cognitive Penetration Challenge. The problem is that covert selection’s role in the suggestion is too trivial. The bi-fold suggestion allows *anything* that lowers reliability to prevent the experience from providing prima facie justification for its content. A tumor that distorted the retinal signals or an unreliable kind of cognitive penetration would have the same epistemic significance as biased covert selection. If the bi-fold suggestion raises a problem for dogmatism at all, it does so independently of covert selection. When we are considering whether covert selection raises a distinctive challenge to dogmatism, we are considering whether there are any objections to dogmatism in which covert selection plays the “lead,” or the “starring role,” in the objection.

Consider the Cognitive Penetration Challenge, as I’ve characterized it. Cognitive penetration isn’t a mere adornment to the objection. Cognitive penetration is a type of causation often thought to be inference-like (see, e.g., Pylyshyn 1999; Gross 2017), and it is an interesting question whether such inference-like causal processes can prevent an experience from having justificatory power when those processes violate epistemic norms of inference (or something analogous to those norms). Such objections really are objections *from cognitive penetration*. Cognitive penetration plays the starring role.

If covert selection raises a challenge to dogmatism at all—if there is to be a challenge *from covert selection—*then it must play a starring role in some objection to dogmatism. If the challenge is to be distinct from the Cognitive Penetration Challenge, then covert selection’s role in the objection must work without appealing to violations of inference-like rules. But once we assume that covert selection is a special type of cognitive penetration, we need to find an objection to dogmatism according to which *that special type* of cognitive penetration (i.e., the type that counts as covert selection) plays a starring role different than the one ordinarily attributed to cognitive penetration. It’s hard to see what that role could be and no one has offered any suggestions. In the absence of epistemic innovation, we can tentatively conclude as follows: if covert selection is to raise a challenge to dogmatism distinct from the Cognitive Penetration Challenge, then covert selection must be a different kind of thing than cognitive penetration.

Siegel (2017a, 2017b) holds that covert selection and cognitive penetration are strictly distinct; however, she assumes that the problematic forms of covert selection either involve problematic forms of cognitive penetration or else involve causal histories that are analogous to problematic forms of cognitive penetration. It is no surprise, then, that she traces the problematic forms of covert selection to violations of inferential norms. The more similar we make covert selection and cognitive penetration, the more likely it is that any covert selection challenge collapses into the Cognitive Penetration Challenge.

*5.2. Covert Selection as Action-Like*

Allport’s account of attention might be taken as a polar opposite of Mole’s view. Recall that, on Mole’s view, covert selection is a type of cognitive penetration. Indeed, covert and overt selection are so *dis*unified that they aren’t even analogues of each other (2015, 222). In contrast, Allport treats covert and overt attention as deeply unified. He holds that attention of either sort is a phenomenon at the level of the whole person (see, e.g., Allport 2011, 25-6, 49-51).[[19]](#footnote-19) It is a mistake to treat any subpersonal process, such as feature binding, as (covert) attention. It is persons who attend, and attention is a relation between persons and that to which they attend.

Once covert attention is thought of as a person-level relation, deeply unified with overt attention, covert selection becomes very different than cognitive penetration. Thus, you might expect a view like Allport’s to support a challenge to dogmatism that is importantly different than the one posed by cognitive penetration. And you’d be right. But now the challenge posed by covert selection just is the challenge posed by overt selection, namely the Bad Search Challenge.

The Bad Search Challenge holds, contra dogmatism, that when my bad search for evidence leads to an experience, the experience may fail to provide prima facie justification for its content. The distinctive issue raised by such objections is pragmatic encroachment, the idea that practical factors partly determine epistemic justification. The previous section explained why bad searches objections are committed to pragmatic encroachment. But, given Allport’s account of covert attention as a person-level relation, that explanation can be extended to show that any covert selection challenge is likewise committed to pragmatic encroachment.

You may doubt that the extension holds if you fail to notice that some relations are actions. If I (intentionally) hug you or kick you, the relation of *my hugging you* or *my kicking you* is the action. Hugging and kicking are relations governed by the same norms that govern actions. Allportian covert and overt attention would likewise be governed by the same norms that govern actions. Just as moral or prudential norms might make it (in)appropriate to hug the person next to you, moral or prudential norms might make it (in)appropriate to attend (overtly or covertly) to a certain characteristic of the person next to you. Consequently, practical considerations partly determine whether my distribution of attention is good or bad.

The collapse is caused, not by Allport’s claim that covert attention is person-level, but by treating covert and overt attention analogously. Consider another common way to think about covert selection: it is subpersonal, distinct from cognitive penetration, and it selects what undergoes further processing in an “action-like” way, analogous to overt, bodily action (Gross 2017, 7; cf. Mole 2015, §3). The more action-like covert selection is, the more what’s selected should be sensitive to practical considerations. For example, suppose a subpersonal mechanism must “decide” whether to submit a certain input to further processing. The quality of this “decision” is not reducible solely to epistemic considerations, such as whether further processing of a given stimulus will increase or decrease reliability. Suppose that further processing would lower the reliability of the resulting experience somewhat by making it more likely that the experience represents a snake when one isn’t there. The loss of reliability might very well be worth it if the further processing also would lower the probability that the perceptual experience will fail to represent a dangerous snake when one is there. When covert selection is tightly connected to person-level relations (Allport) or what is submitted for further processing (Gross), practical considerations matter, such as the relative importance of avoiding false positives and false negatives.

Applied to the cases at hand, the argument of section 4 goes as follows. Person-level distributions of attention or subpersonal “choices” of what to submit for further processing prevent a resulting experience from prima facie justifying its content only if the distributions/choices are bad. But the badness of a distribution/choice is not a purely epistemic matter; practical considerations also matter. Thus, if the badness of a distribution of covert attention/subpersonal “choice” matter epistemically, then practical considerations matter epistemically. In other words, accounts that make covert attention analogous to action challenge dogmatism only by invoking pragmatic encroachment, only by collapsing into the Bad Search Challenge.

What we’ve seen is that the more similar we make covert selection and cognitive penetration, the more likely it is that any covert selection challenge collapses into the Cognitive Penetration Challenge. The more similar we make covert and overt selection, the more likely it is that any covert selection challenge collapses into the Bad Search Challenge. There is, perhaps, some room for metaphysical innovation that makes covert selection neither inference-like nor action-like. But absent such innovation, we can conclude that covert selection doesn’t pose a new challenge to dogmatism’s truth.

**6. An Indirect Challenge?**

We’ve seen that covert selection can’t provide a direct challenge to dogmatism (i.e. show that dogmatism is false) without collapsing into an existing challenge for dogmatism. In this section, we consider whether covert selection can *in*directly challenge dogmatism by, e.g., challenging an explanatory ambition held by typical dogmatists. I’ll argue that it can but, yet again, the challenge is nothing new.

The alleged epistemic relevance depends on a controversial account of evidence possession, one which allows past experiences to be relevant counterevidence now (even if you don’t remember having them). Suppose I will win a prize if all the squares in a display are red. At time *t*0, I begin a visual scan of the display and several seconds later, at *t*2, I have a perceptual experience that **R**, i.e. that all the squares are red. So far, so good; but there’s a twist. At some intermediate point in the scanning, I had a perceptual experience of a blue square but my desire to win the prize prevents that experience from making a difference to subsequent perceptual or cognitive processing, and so I do not even remember having the blue square experience. To use Siegel’s apt phrase, the desire “anti-selects the experience for uptake” (e.g., 2013a). So I *now* have an experience that represents all squares as red even though a few seconds ago my experience represented a blue square. Siegel argues that I now lack justification to believe R, because my past, unremembered experience of the blue square continues to count as relevant counterevidence for the claim that all the squares are red (2017b, 429).[[20]](#footnote-20)

Siegel’s suggestion doesn’t provide a direct challenge to dogmatism’s truth. Dogmatism claims that my experience that R provides justification to believe R *if* there are no defeaters, no relevant counterevidence. As the case was described, however, my past experience is relevant counterevidence and thus dogmatism takes no stand on whether I now have justification to believe R. If Siegel’s suggestion poses a challenge to dogmatism, it will be in a more indirect way.

Strictly speaking, dogmatism says only that one’s (current) perceptual experience that P is sufficient for justification in the absence of defeaters; it comments on neither whether perceptual experiences are necessary for justification nor whether past perceptual experiences can count as current (counter)evidence. Nonetheless, dogmatists often have explanatory ambitions that go beyond the sufficient condition espoused in their dogmatism. For example, some of them aim to explain all justified belief by ultimately appealing to some experience or another (where “experience” is understood broadly enough to include intuitions and apparent memories).[[21]](#footnote-21) If we follow Siegel and hold that *past* experiences can provide a defeater or relevant counterevidence for current perceptual justification, then one might worry that we are giving up on the spirit of dogmatism.[[22]](#footnote-22)

As you consider the force of this objection, remember what I’m up to in this paper. I’m arguing that covert attention raises no new challenge for the dogmatist that the dogmatist does not already face. If dogmatists tend to have certain explanatory ambitions, then the objector is correct that problems for those explanatory ambitions are problems for at least those specific dogmatists. Yet these problems are nothing new: the relevant explanatory ambitions *already* face the issues raised by Siegel’s first suggestion. In fact, the dogmatist already faces this challenge—call it the **Past Experiences Matter Challenge***—*in two distinct ways.

Dogmatists with the relevant explanatory ambitions allow that apparent memories/memorial experiences (one’s having a conscious episode of seeming to remember such and such) provide prima facie justification to believe their contents. Perceptual dogmatists are, in other words, often **memorial dogmatists**.[[23]](#footnote-23) Yet certain cases provide a well-known challenge to memorial dogmatism.

Suppose that a few days ago I read that (J) a protester, while waving a sign, matched Congressman Paul Ryan’s jogging pace for 9 miles. I believe what I read despite knowing that I’m reading *The* *Onion* and am well aware of the venue’s satirical nature. My belief that J is irrational at the time it was formed, because my awareness of the belief’s source provided a defeater to the justification I would ordinarily have on the basis of testimony. Yet suppose now that I seem to remember J’s being true and I believe J on this basis. The catch is that I no longer recall—I have completely forgotten—the source of my belief in J. I *now* have no representational state that would plausibly count as counterevidence to my belief that J, as I did when I first formed the belief. Nonetheless, many people have the intuition that my current belief in J is not justified, despite my lacking any current representational state that could plausibly count as a defeater.

The Paul Ryan case, and cases like it, put pressure on the memorial dogmatist to find a way for *past defeaters* to continue to have influence on my current justification while remaining faithful to their explanatory ambitions. Note that the explanatory ambition I mentioned—to ultimately account for all justification by appealing to experience—is compatible with past experiences making some sort of difference to current degrees of justification (or lack thereof). One way to grant past experience current epistemic relevance is to allow past experiences to count as current counterevidence, as Siegel suggested, but there may be other ways of doing so that are equally congruent with both our intuitions about which beliefs are justified and the explanatory ambitions of typical dogmatists. What the red square case and the Paul Ryan case show, if anything, is just that past experience can somehow negatively affect current justification. Further argument is needed to determine that the most plausible model for this negative effect (given the explanatory ambitions of typical dogmatists) is by allowing past experiences to play the role of current counterevidence.[[24]](#footnote-24)

I’ve said that the challenge that Siegel raises to dogmatism’s explanatory ambitions is already raised in two distinct ways. First, as we just saw, certain cases put pressure on the dogmatist to allow past experience to *negatively affect* a person’s degree of justification for believing a proposition. Second, dogmatists are under intuitive pressure to allow past experience to *positively affect* a person’s degree of justification for believing a proposition. (While the most salient feature of Siegel’s purported moral concerns the negative effect, namely that past experiences can count as current counterevidence to a proposition, this negative effect may depend on the positive effect. For example, one way to have a defeater for believing P is to have evidence for ~P.)

Right now I have justification to believe a great many empirical propositions:[[25]](#footnote-25) propositions about where I live, where my siblings live, how tall my kids are, how much of my office space is devoted to coffee paraphernalia, what color my kitchen is, etc. The problem for the dogmatist is posed by the scope of my current justified empirical beliefs when compared with the scope of my current experience. My current perceptual experience is fairly limited in what it represents—basically just the look of my desk and computer, the lingering smell of coffee and chalk, and the sound of the bad music that I tend to like. It is not currently representing anything about the size of my children, about my siblings, or the color of my kitchen. And before I started thinking about my children, siblings, or kitchen, I had no relevant memorial experiences that provided me with justification to believe any claims about them. Thus, how can the dogmatist account for the full scope of justified empirical belief given the limited perceptual and memorial experiences we have at any given moment?

The dogmatist, then, is under intuitive pressure to allow past perceptual experiences to somehow make a *positive* difference to perceptual justification now. One way is to allow past experiences to provide evidence *now* for the relevant claims, but we shouldn’t assume that this is the only way for the dogmatist to account for the scope of justified empirical beliefs that is congruent with his explanatory ambitions.

Suppose that Seigel’s red square case shows us that past experience can count as current counterevidence. I’ve conceded that, although this result poses no direct challenge to dogmatism, it does challenge an explanatory ambition of typical dogmatists. Yet this challenge is not new: it’s one that that the dogmatist already faces for independent reasons having to do with the tricky interaction of perceptual and memorial justification.

I’ve argued that dogmatism already faces direct challenges that appeal to (i) subpersonal violations of inferential(-like) norms and (ii) pragmatic encroachment. The explanatory ambitions of dogmatism already face challenges that appeal to (iii) the tricky interaction of perceptual and memorial justification. *The take-home message of the chapter is this: there is no way for covert selection to pose a problem for dogmatism or the explanatory ambition of typical dogmatists without appealing to at least one of (i)-(iii), and thus there is no way for covert selection to raise a new challenge for dogmatism or the relevant explanatory ambition.*

**7. Conclusion**

Dogmatism is the claim that, necessarily, perceptual experiences provide one with *prima facie* justification to believe their contents (equivalently: necessarily, perceptual experiences provide one with justification to believe their contents *in the absence of defeaters*). We’ve seen that dogmatism faces a number of different challenges. I’ll forgive the psychologists if they conclude that dogmatism faces too many challenges to be taken seriously; however, in philosophy, all views face many challenges. The goal is to figure out which view is least bad, and dogmatism is in the running for the least bad view of perceptual justification.

The goal was to determine whether covert selection poses a *new* challenge to dogmatism or one of its explanatory ambitions. I’ve argued that it does not. Covert selection may raise a direct challenge to dogmatism’s truth. Which direct challenge it raises depends on what precisely covert selection is. If covert selection is analogous to cognitive penetration, then it raises the Cognitive Penetration Challenge. If it is analogous to overt attention, then it raises the Bad Search Challenge. Either way, the challenge to dogmatism is old news.

I’ve also conceded that covert selection may raise an indirect challenge to dogmatism. Dogmatists who aim to account for all justification by appealing to experience may be pressured into allowing past experiences to somehow make a difference to what one is currently justified in believing. But that pressure exists because of tricky issues concerning the interaction of perceptual and memorial justification, and we do not need covert selection to raise this challenge to the explanatory ambition of typical dogmatists.

Dogmatists, like me, have their work cut out for them. To successfully defend their view, they must address a number of distinct challenges. The burgeoning philosophical work on the metaphysics and epistemology of attention makes one wonder whether covert selection could lead to a further challenge for the dogmatist. I have argued that it does not. Phew. That’s one less thing I need to be worried about![[26]](#footnote-26)

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1. I generally suppress the “cognitive” qualifier from here on out. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Attention has been claimed to be, for example, a subpersonal capacity or mechanism; a certain kind of subpersonal process; a way processing happens; a feature of experience; and a person-level relation between a thing and object. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Traditionally, the bad search challenges target most directly, not perceptual dogmatism, but the thesis that undefeated evidence suffices for justification. But the challenge extends equally to perceptual dogmatism. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. There are at least two kinds of counterevidence, rebutting and undermining. Suppose you have some evidence for proposition P. Rebutting counterevidence is evidence that P is false. In contrast, undermining evidence might be evidence, not that P is false, but that your evidence for P is unreliable. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. As attractive as I find this reasoning, no one has been able to turn it into a successful argument (see my forthcoming or my 2013, 9–12 for an explanation of the problem). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See, e.g., Huemer (2001, 2013a), Pryor (2000), and Tucker (2010, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. They explicitly say that “Perceptual *accuracy* is defined as the ability to correctly identify the visual experience” (pg XX8, emphasis in original). Here I think they are using “ability” and “visual experience” too loosely. Based on the examples, I think they mean: perceptual accuracy is the extent to which a given perceptual state (e.g., perceptual experience, perceptual judgment) correctly represents the target distal stimuli. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Here I use “perceptual judgment” loosely. In the cases they discuss, it isn’t always clear whether the biased judgment is solely based on the perceptual experience or whether it is closer to the conclusion of an inference from both perceptual and background beliefs. For an empirically informed discussion of which beliefs strictly count as perceptual, see Lyons (2009, ch. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The vagueness of naïve realism is an additional problem. Naïve realism will be an implausible thesis, and so trivial to argue against, if it is the universal generalization that *all* perceptual experiences are accurate and unaffected by bias. Perhaps Granot, *et al* intend naïve realism as some sort of generic generalization. Yet true generics are compatible with “exceptions that prove the rule:” dogs have four legs, but three legged dogs exist. Granot, *et al* could be clearer about why the alleged exceptions to naïve realism count as counterexamples rather than exceptions that prove the rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Granot, *et al* defend the second assumption by appealing to philosophical argument, namely an analogy with the *International Survey of Painting and Sculpture* exhibition (XX20). They claim that the show misrepresents something about the artists who make the best art (they don’t specify what), because the show featured the work of only 148 men, 13 women, and no artists of color. We can agree that the exhibition problematically excluded minorities and may mislead people into thinking that art from minorities is not worth their consideration. Yet the exhibition, strictly speaking, *misrepresents* something about X *only if* it represents something about X. While it is at least somewhat plausible that the exhibition was representing—and also misrepresenting—something about the artists who make the best art, it is implausible that it is representing every part “of what is really out there” (XX20) or that it is some “complete representation of the world” (XX5). The exhibition did not represent—and so did not misrepresent—anything about how darkly roasted I like my coffee (I like it no darker than medium). My perceptual experience misrepresents some part of my visual scene only if it is both representing that part of the visual scene and doing so inaccurately. A perceptual experience that doesn’t represent the gorilla in the middle of the scene or doesn’t represent the gorilla *as a gorilla* may nonetheless be accurate as far as it goes. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Proponents of this challenge include Markie (2005, 356–7, 2013), McGrath (2013), and Siegel (2012). Defenses of dogmatism from this challenge include Huemer (2013a, 343–345, 2013b), Skene (2013, §5.1), and Tucker (2010, §6, 2014). Keep in mind that virtually every traditional rival to dogmatism, including reliabilism, faces a cognitive penetration challenge that is at least as bad as the one faced by dogmatism (see my 2014). So most epistemologists issue this challenge against dogmatism at their own peril. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The strongest and simplest cognitive penetration challenges focus on cases in which the *experience* is cognitively penetrated, i.e., when a cognitive state influences the experience via an unbroken series of subpersonal processing. In principle (see note 15 below), one could instead argue that justificatory power of an experience can be affected when *some other state* is cognitively penetrated. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Heaven help me if pressed for what it takes for something to count as the relevant sort of processing. Nobody seems to have a good answer to that question. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. I don’t know that anyone has offered a satisfying account of what distinguishes epistemic and practical considerations. It’s best to stick with examples of each and hope that you have at least some vague idea of what the distinction amounts to. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Siegel (2017b, part III; cf., 2017a, chapter 9) may insist that biased searches can have a purely epistemic impact, and, contrary to my diagnosis, the Bad Search Challenge need not concern the interaction of epistemic and practical factors. Yet her explanation of how biased searches have purely epistemic relevance explicitly assumes that cognitive penetration can affect whether it is rational to rely on feelings of trust in a search process. Thus, such an approach is no good if we are trying to keep the Bad Search Challenge independent of the Cognitive Penetration Challenge. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Feldman agrees that bad search objections raise the issue of pragmatic encroachment, though not in those terms (Feldman 1988, 235–6, cf. 2000, 189, 2008, 347, Feldman and Conee 2001, 89–90; also see Conee and Feldman 2011, 313). He also claims, incorrectly in my view, that the distinction between synchronic and diachronic justification is important in this context (e.g., 2000, 188–9, as well as 1988, 235). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. One might wonder whether virtue epistemology can underwrite a bad search challenge without appealing to pragmatic encroachment. I don’t have space for a full reply, but here are two things to think about. First, keep in mind that the intellectual character which most directly results in believing P is assumed to be virtuous (we assume the subject has evidence that would justify believing P, were it not acquired in a bad search). The proponent of a virtue-driven bad search challenge must explain why the intellectual character involved in selecting a given past *action* (how and whether to search for (further) evidence) is relevant to whether one has justification to believe P. My contention is that any such explanation will be committed to pragmatic encroachment. Second, for homework, you can consider Baehr’s (2011) virtue-driven bad search challenge and Baril’s (2013, §3.3) explanation of how Baehr’s virtue epistemology is committed to pragmatic encroachment. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. As epistemologists use the term “reliable”, it refers to something’s tendency to yield true rather than false representations. Part (i) of the suggestion might be cashed out by saying that experiences need to be caused by a process that is *un*conditionally reliable and inferences need only be conditionally reliable, i.e., unconditionally reliable *on the condition that* the inputs of the inferences are true. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Allport and I both allow that organisms can attend even if they aren’t persons. I’m just focusing on people here. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Siegel suggests that, even if past the perceptual representation of the blue square were preconscious, the past preconscious blue square representation could still count as counterevidence. Perhaps, but such a claim depends on the thesis that preconscious states can count as (counter)evidence. That thesis, by itself, is in tension with the below explanatory ambition of typical dogmatists, and to the limited extent that Siegel defends the thesis, her defense doesn’t appeal to attention. Consider a modification of Siegel and Silins’ distracted driver case (2014, 159). In this modified case, the subject successfully drives toward her intended destination, stops and turns when necessary, all the while lacking any conscious experience concerning the road at all. Perhaps the driver nonetheless forms perceptual beliefs about stoplights, curves in the road, etc. Siegel assumes that these beliefs are justified. If she is right, then perhaps a natural conclusion to draw is that some unconscious representation is justifying the belief. This would challenge the relevant explanatory ambition, but appeals to covert selection are not needed to pose this challenge. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. This ambition is especially held by those dogmatists who endorse phenomenal conservatism, such as Huemer (2001, 2013a) and Tucker (2010, 542, nt 3, 2011). This ambition is not often stated in print, but I can speak for myself as a proponent of dogmatism that I do hope that experience ultimately accounts for all justification. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Thanks to Hilary Kornblith and Jessie Munton for helping me see the importance of considering this objection. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Even perceptual dogmatists who apparently lack the relevant explanatory ambition, such as Pollock (1986, 44–52) and possibly also Audi (2013, 188–9), also endorse memorial dogmatism. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Huemer (1999) for one dogmatist attempt to deal with these issues in a way that allows past experiences to affect current justification without past experience playing the role of current defeaters. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Most propositions about the past, present, and future, including scientific ones, are empirical in the relevant sense. Logical propositions (modus ponens is valid), mathematical propositions (2+2=4), and moral judgments (it is morally wrong to torture for fun) are non-empirical. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Thanks to Nathan Ballantyne, David Dunning, Joshua Gert, as well as the audiences at the *NYC Epistemology and Psychology Conference* and the *6th Annual BELUX Conference*, for very helpful comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)