

EXTERNALIST JUSTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF APPEARANCES

Michael Bergmann

It's not implausible to think that whenever I have a justified noninferential belief that *p*, it is caused by a seeming that *p*. I believe that there's a computer screen in front of me right now because it seems to me that there is. I believe that I went for a walk this morning because it seems to me that I did. I believe that two is greater than one because it seems to me that two is greater than one. I believe that I've got a sore knee because it seems to me that I've got a sore knee. These seemings (or appearances, as I'll sometimes call them) are distinct from my beliefs—an appearance that *p* often remains after I give up my belief that *p*. And the appearances seem to explain why I hold the beliefs: the justified beliefs just mentioned are held because of the seemings that cause them. It's also tempting to think that something contributes to the justification of my belief only if I hold my belief *because* of that thing. (E.g., a belief isn't justified by reasons unless one holds it because of those reasons.) Thus, given that many of our noninferential beliefs are justified and that we hold them because of appearances, one might be inclined to conclude that appearances play a crucial role—perhaps the *only* crucial role—in the justification of our noninferential beliefs. Michael Huemer's Phenomenal Conservatism and Richard Swinburne's Principle of Credulity are views of this sort, as is what Earl Conee calls 'Seeming Evidentialism'.¹

¹ Huemer (2006: 148 & 2007: 30) defines Phenomenal Conservatism as follows:

PC If it seems to *S* that *p*, then, in the absence of defeaters, *S* thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that *p*.

Huemer also makes it clear (2001: 99-100) that he thinks nothing other than seemings (i.e. appearances) gives our beliefs prima facie noninferential justification. Chris Tucker (unpublished) holds a very similar view.

Swinburne (1998: 20) defines the Principle of Credulity as the view that "other things being equal, it is probable and so rational to believe that things are as they seem to be". He goes on to say (1998: 21) that "all and only" the beliefs formed in accord with appearances are "properly basic" (i.e., noninferentially justified). In later work (2001: 141-49) he says that the only way our noninferential beliefs in contingent propositions can get prima

The view that appearances play *a* crucial role or *the only* crucial role in the justification of our noninferential beliefs doesn't sit well with externalist accounts of justification. It's natural to think that a noninferential belief that *p* can be formed in response to a seeming that *p* even though that belief doesn't satisfy the requirements for justification imposed by externalist accounts (e.g., being reliably formed or tracking the truth or being produced in accord with proper function). Externalist views on justification thus seem to conflict with the idea that being caused by a seeming that *p* is *sufficient* for the prima facie justification of a belief that *p*. Moreover, externalist views typically make no mention of appearances when identifying what's required for a belief's justification. This suggests that they also deny that being caused by a seeming that *p* is *necessary* for the justification of a noninferential belief that *p*.

As a result, the attractiveness of the intuitions offered in support of views like Phenomenal Conservatism present something of a difficulty for externalist accounts of justification.² The purpose of this paper is to deal with that difficulty. The way I propose to deal with it is to develop and defend an externalist-friendly account of the seemingly pervasive role of appearances in the formation and justification of our noninferential beliefs—an account that incorporates what is attractive in the account of this role given by views like Phenomenal Conservatism. Although I find plausible the externalist-friendly account of the role of appearances that I'll be developing (henceforward EFARA), I am not committed to its truth. Instead, I offer it as a way for externalists to deal with the intuitions appealed to in support of

facie justification—and the way in which they in fact do get such justification—is as a result of their contents seeming to us to be true.

Conee (2004: 15) says that according to Seeming Evidentialism (SE) “positive evidence is supplied by seeming truth”. He goes on (2004: 16) to suggest that, according to SE, *only* beliefs in propositions that seem true are rational or justified: “Concerning any thought, our epistemically rational basis for our initial thinking about its truth is our initial evidence on the matter. On the present version of evidentialism, SE, this consists in how things initially seem to us.” I should note that although Conee says things in defense of Seeming Evidentialism, it's not clear that he endorses the view.

² They also presents a problem for *internalist* accounts of justification that deny that being based on a seeming that *p* is both necessary and, absent defeaters, sufficient for some degree of justification for a noninferential belief that *p*.

views like Phenomenal Conservatism. Because EFARA incorporates the plausible elements of views like Phenomenal Conservatism, externalists can explain the attractiveness of such views by noting their similarity to EFARA.³ Given that EFARA differs from views like Phenomenal Conservatism by being compatible with externalist accounts of justification, the difficulties mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph needn't be a source of concern to externalists. They can simply note that the most plausible of the intuitions appealed to in support of views like Phenomenal Conservatism can be accepted by externalists who endorse views like EFARA.

Thus, this paper takes seriously the attractiveness of the intuitions appealed to in support of views like Phenomenal Conservatism. It doesn't outright endorse them. But neither does it simply dismiss them. Instead, it admits they are plausible and explains how an externalist might accommodate them (i.e., by endorsing a view like EFARA). I begin in section I with a few preliminary remarks about appearances and justification. In section II, I present and defend EFARA and its rejection of views like Phenomenal Conservatism. In the final section, I will show how EFARA can handle some of the objections that have been and could be raised against it.

I. Justification and Appearances

It will be helpful up front to say a little about the view of justification I'll be employing and about what appearances are and how I'll be thinking of their role in the formation of our beliefs.

³ Externalists who don't find attractive *any* of the elements of views like Phenomenal Conservatism won't think that any serious challenge to externalism arises from such views. As a result, they won't find EFARA to be helpful or needed. My target audience consists of the internalists and externalists who think there is at least something attractive about views like Phenomenal Conservatism.

I'll start by discussing appearances, with the aim of conceding a fair amount of ground to views like Phenomenal Conservatism.

A. The Role of Appearances in the Formation of Our Beliefs

Building on remarks by Earl Conee and Michael Huemer (both of whom have presented and defended views like Phenomenal Conservatism⁴), I want to distinguish the following four things that are present in the formation of at least some of our justified noninferential beliefs: an experiential ground in response to which appearances occur, appearances, inclinations to believe, and beliefs.

Following Huemer and others, we can begin by noting, as I did in the introduction, that seemings (appearances) are distinct from beliefs: it can seem to you that p even if you don't believe p, perhaps because you think the seeming is misleading (e.g., it can seem to you that the stick half-submerged in water is bent though you don't believe it is).⁵ Huemer also mentions (2007: 31) several reasons for thinking that seemings are distinct from inclinations to believe: (i) inclinations to believe are typically *explained by* seemings, (ii) inclinations to believe can be caused by things other than seemings (e.g. desires), and (iii) one can have a seeming that p without any inclination to believe that p (e.g., if one has become very thoroughly convinced that the seeming in question is misleading). Furthermore, given that, in general, being inclined to do X doesn't entail doing X, it's also plausible to think that we can have an inclination to believe p without believing p.

⁴ Huemer discusses and defends PC (see footnote 1) in his 2001, 2006, and 2007. In his 2004, Conee defends, but comes short of endorsing, Seeming Evidentialism, a view which he notes (2004: 15-16, n. 8) is quite similar to PC.

⁵ See Huemer 2007: 30-31.

Consider next the distinction between an appearance and an experiential ground on which such an appearance is based. Conee points out (2004: 15) that when we have a seeming that *p*, it's in virtue of our awareness of things (such as conscious qualities or conceptual connections) that we are spontaneously inclined to regard as indicative of the truth of *p*. So, for example, when I'm feeling around in the dark and I grab a billiard ball, it seems to me that there's a hard smooth spherical object in my hand. And I have this seeming because of my tactile experience. It's possible for some cognizer to have a tactile experience that is phenomenally the same as the one I have when grabbing the billiard ball (same sensory feelings) without having any seeming about any object in her environment—that is, it's possible for that tactile experience not to result in a seeming of the sort I have in that situation. The tactile feeling is one thing and the seeming is another: it's a response to the tactile experience, something based on (and which needn't accompany) that tactile experience.⁶ Conee makes a similar point about seemings connected with obviously necessary truths such as “Any golden trumpet is a trumpet”. In this case, Conee says, we directly apprehend the proposition and some relations among the concepts in it (1998: 851-2). In response to this direct apprehension of the proposition and the conceptual relations included in it, it seems to us that the proposition is true (Conee 2004: 15). The apprehension of the proposition and of the relations among its constituent concepts is one thing; the appearance (seeming) that the proposition is true is another. What we have in each of these cases, then, is an experience (a tactile experience in one case, an apprehension experience in the other) in response to which a seeming occurs. The tactile

⁶ In Bergmann (2006: 114-16) I introduced the notion of a connector—a felt inclination to take one's sensory experience as indicative of the truth of some proposition. The idea was that, in response to having a sensory experience, a person often has a felt inclination to take that experience as indicative of some proposition *p* and, as a result, the person believes *p* on the basis of that sensory experience and that connector. What I'm proposing above in the text is very similar to what I said in that earlier discussion in that it distinguishes the sensory experience from an experience that inclines us to believe a certain proposition.

experience or apprehension experience is the experiential ground on which the seeming is based.⁷

Putting all this together, the picture of belief formation that emerges (for at least some of our justified noninferential beliefs) is the following: *an experiential ground causes a seeming that p and the seeming that p causes the noninferential belief that p.*⁸ In perception, the experiential ground on which the seeming is based is a sensory experience; in a priori belief, the experiential ground is an apprehension experience. In each of these examples, the experiential ground causes a seeming that p, which in turn leads to a noninferential belief that p. It is common and, I think, true to say that perceptual beliefs are based on sensory experiences (that's how it seems to us when we consider why we're forming those beliefs). According to the picture I've just presented, perceptual beliefs are indirectly based on sensory experiences. They're more directly based on seemings, which are, in turn, based on sensory experiences. Together, the sensory experiences and the seemings on which perceptual beliefs are based constitute the subject's evidence for those beliefs.

I say this picture (i.e., experiential ground causing a seeming which causes a belief) applies for at least *some* of our justified noninferential beliefs. The reason I don't say it holds for all of our justified noninferential beliefs is that some of our justified noninferential beliefs may be based on seemings that aren't based on any other mental states. (Perhaps our memory beliefs are like this.) So the more general picture, applying to all of our justified noninferential beliefs is

⁷ As I understand the apprehension experience, it can be either illusory or veridical. It's possible to have an experience (one that is phenomenally like the experience of having a veridical direct apprehension) of a relation R holding among the conceptual constituents of p when in fact relation R doesn't hold among the conceptual constituents of p. That's why some possible apprehension experiences of such relations holding are illusory and some are veridical.

⁸ If we distinguish inclinations to believe to which we succumb from those to which we don't succumb, and call the former 'effective inclinations to believe,' then (given that seemings cause beliefs via inclinations to believe) we can say that when a seeming that p causes a belief that p, the seeming resulted in an effective inclination to believe that p.

as follows: every belief that *p* is based on a seeming that *p* and at least some of our seemings are based on experiential grounds (with perceptual beliefs being the prime examples).

One complication worth highlighting is that we often have conflicting seemings. Take for example cases of sensory or a priori illusion: it seems that the stick submerged halfway into the water is bent but we don't believe it is; it seems that every coherent condition (including being non-self-membered) determines a set but, once we learn of the Russell paradox, we don't believe it. What's going on here is that it also seems to us (for a variety of reasons) that the stick *isn't* bent and that being non-self-membered is a coherent condition that *doesn't* determine a set. In a rational person, the seeming that the half-submerged stick isn't bent will be much stronger than the seeming that it is bent; likewise, in such a person, the inclination to believe in accord with that stronger seeming will be much stronger than the inclination to believe in accord with the weaker contrary seeming. As a result, the seeming that the stick is not bent will override the seeming to the contrary and the person will believe that the stick is not bent.

While not wanting to commit myself to the truth of the above picture of how we form our justified noninferential beliefs, I confess that I do find it plausible. This is my concession to views like Phenomenal Conservatism. When, in section II, I lay out an externalist-friendly account of the role of appearances (seemings) in the *justification* of noninferential beliefs, I will take for granted the accuracy of the above account of the role of appearances in the *formation* of our noninferential beliefs. By doing so, I will show how externalists who endorse EFARA can reject Phenomenal Conservatism while granting some of its more plausible proposals about the role of appearances in belief formation.

B. Justification

In order to maximize the appeal of EFARA (which will be laid out in section II), I will not be relying on any particular externalist analysis of justification in defending it. Instead, I will rely mainly on two theses that a number of externalist positions have in common.⁹ These two theses are Objectivity and Contingency.

Objectivity is the denial of the view that a doxastic response to experience is fitting so long as it feels right to the subject. According to Objectivity, it is possible for S's belief response to her experience to seem to her to be entirely fitting and epistemically appropriate when in fact it is objectively unfitting (epistemically). Likewise, according to Objectivity, it is possible for S's belief response to her experience (e.g., a sensory experience) to be objectively unfitting epistemically even when—in virtue of the fact that that experience causes the content of that belief to seem true to S—that belief response feels right to S.¹⁰ There are many belief responses to experience that we can see are epistemically unfitting for us (e.g., believing, in response to the sensory experience I'm having as I sit in my quiet office looking at my computer, that I'm sitting on a mountaintop enjoying a view of the clear night sky while listening to a choir singing Handel's *Messiah*). Objectivity says that such unfittingness won't disappear (a) merely as a result of its coming to seem to the subject that that belief response to that experience is epistemically fitting or (b) merely because that belief response to that experience feels right

⁹ I'm focusing throughout on doxastic justification, not propositional justification. Doxastic justification is justification a belief has if it is formed the right way. Propositional justification is justification proposition p has relative to a person if that person has evidence such that, if she believed p on the basis of that evidence, her belief would be doxastically justified. A proposition p can be propositionally justified for a person even if she doesn't believe it or if she believes it but not on the basis of the evidence that makes it propositionally justified (in which case it lacks doxastic justification).

¹⁰ Thus, Objectivity is opposed to views that (a) acknowledge that perceptual beliefs are (indirect) responses to sensory experience via seemings (i.e., the sensory experience causes the seeming which causes the belief) and (b) insist that such belief responses to sensory experience are epistemically appropriate so long as the experience causes the belief via a seeming with a content matching the belief's content (and there is no contrary seeming).

because that experience causes that belief to seem true. The evidentialist, Richard Feldman, seems to endorse this position (1988: 411) as does Peter Markie (2005: 356-57; 2006: 119-20) who thinks of justification as being determined by the epistemic norms one adopts. Indeed, Objectivity is likely to be endorsed by most epistemologists—including, of course, externalists—who reject views like Phenomenal Conservatism.¹¹

Contingency is the view that the fittingness or unfittingness of an automatic unlearned belief response B to experience E is a contingent feature of that belief response to that experience.¹² The idea here is that a belief B might be an epistemically appropriate automatic unlearned response *for humans* to sensory experience E whereas a belief with the same content as B¹³ might be an epistemically inappropriate unlearned response *for some alien cognizer* to a sensory experience that is phenomenally identical to E.¹⁴ For example, although it's epistemically appropriate for me to believe, based on the tactile sensations I'm experiencing while touching an object, that the object is hard, this same noninferential belief might be an inappropriate response to that same sensory experience for an alien cognizer. It may be that

¹¹ For a more lengthy explanation of Objectivity, see Bergmann 2006: 114-18.

¹² Two points of clarification: First, to deny Contingency is to endorse Necessity, the claim that if B is a fitting response to E by itself, then, even if B could be an unfitting response to evidence that includes E *and more besides*, it couldn't be an unfitting response to E by itself. Second, for almost any experience E, a cognizer can reasonably learn, without relying on E as evidence, that E is an indication of B's truth. That's a learned belief response to experience E. My focus in this paper is on *unlearned* automatic belief responses to experience. These are cases where the experience is (at some point in the believer's cognitive development) treated as evidence indicative of the belief's truth without the believer first learning by some other means that the experience is correlated with the truth of that belief. Some unlearned belief responses to experience are epistemically appropriate and some are not. See Bergmann (2006: 116-18) for further discussion of learned and unlearned belief responses to experience.

¹³ Here I've specified sameness of belief type in terms of belief content. Given that many of our beliefs are indexical, it will often be more helpful to specify sameness of belief type in terms of belief character (so that beliefs with the same character but different content count as beliefs of the same type). See Kaplan 1989 for a discussion of the distinction between character and content.

¹⁴ Recall that if a human noninferential belief that p is based on sensory experience E, it is typically *derivatively* based on E. In most cases (in particular, those in which the belief that p is justified) it is directly based on a seeming that p, which in turn is based on E. In thinking about such cases, it may be helpful to keep in mind another version of Contingency, Contingency*, which replaces talk of a belief formed in response to E with talk of a *seeming* formed in response to E—noting that a seeming that p could be a fitting response to E for humans and an unfitting response to E for some alien cognizers. Contingency's truth, as applied to humans, could then be explained using Contingency*.

sensory experiences of that phenomenal type are not what members of that alien species naturally have when touching hard objects or what they naturally use as a basis for beliefs about hardness. Instead, they might use some other sensory experiences (e.g., something phenomenally like our olfactory sensations) as a basis for beliefs about hardness and use experiences phenomenally like our tactile sensations (but which are triggered differently than our tactile sensations) as a basis for other beliefs—e.g., beliefs about how far away from us objects are. For such alien creatures, it's not epistemically appropriate to hold the belief about hardness in response to tactile sensations.¹⁵ Contingency is held, perhaps most notably, by Thomas Reid¹⁶ and is endorsed today by proper functionalists such as Plantinga, by reliabilists such as Greco, and also by Markie with his “epistemic norms” view on justification.¹⁷

As I've noted, my defense of EFARA in the next section relies on an understanding of justification according to which Objectivity and Contingency are true. Although reliabilists can endorse this pair of theses, doing so doesn't commit one to reliabilism (both Markie and I endorse Objectivity and Contingency while rejecting reliabilism).¹⁸ And although proper functionalists will find this pair of theses attractive, endorsement of them doesn't commit one to proper functionalism.¹⁹ With this understanding of justification and of the role of appearances in our noninferential belief *formation* in place, we can now turn to a presentation of an externalist-friendly account of the role of appearances in *justification*.

¹⁵ See my 2006: 118-30 for a defense of Contingency (there it's described as an objection to Necessity, the denial of what I'm here calling Contingency).

¹⁶ Reid says “no man can give a reason why the sensations of smell, or taste, or sound, might not have indicated hardness, as well as that sensation, which, by our constitution does indicate it.” (Reid [1764] 1997: 57).

¹⁷ See Plantinga (1993: 54–63), Greco (2000: 173–4), and Markie (2004: 530–3; 2006: 118-19).

¹⁸ See Bergmann 2006, ch. 5 and Markie 2004.

¹⁹ See Markie 2004 and 2006 for an example of how one can endorse Objectivity and Contingency while rejecting proper functionalism. (Markie, in his 2004, claims to reject Objectivism. But Objectivism is compatible with Objectivity, which he endorses.)

II. An Externalist-Friendly Account of the Role of Appearances in Justification

A. Are Appearances Necessary for Justification?

EFARA has two main components: an account of the role of appearances in our belief *formation* and an account of the role of appearances in belief *justification*. The first component was presented in section I.A and is compatible with views like Phenomenal Conservatism. It said that our noninferential beliefs are typically caused by seemings with the same content and that in many cases these seemings are caused by an experiential ground. The second component of EFARA takes for granted that all of our justified noninferential beliefs are caused by appearances. Proponents of EFARA could even grant that our beliefs *cannot* be justified unless they are caused by appearances. But human belief formation isn't the only possible kind of belief formation. So a further question is whether, in general, a noninferential belief that p can be justified only if it is caused by an appearance that p. As I've already noted above, Huemer thinks we need to distinguish appearances, inclinations to believe, and beliefs. He also thinks (2007:40) that, although we seem to form our beliefs (at least our justified ones) in response to appearances, there could be beings whose natural way of forming noninferential beliefs was not in response to appearances. I agree that it is possible for there to be beings that *naturally* form noninferential beliefs in that way (i.e., not in response to appearances). And just as our natural way of forming noninferential beliefs in response to appearances is rational for us, so also (given Contingency) their natural way of forming noninferential beliefs without basing them on appearances, could be rational for them. But then it is false that a noninferential belief that p can be justified only if it is caused by an appearance that p.

Phenomenal Conservatism can be understood as either a general principle or a restricted one:

PC_G Necessarily, for any possible cognizer S, S's noninferential belief that p has some degree of justification if and only if it seems to S that p and on that basis S believes that p, in the absence of defeaters.

PC_R Necessarily, for any human S, S's noninferential belief that p has some degree of justification if and only if it seems to S that p and on that basis S believes that p, in the absence of defeaters.²⁰

The previous paragraph gives us reason to reject PC_G by denying that appearances are *necessary* for the justification of noninferential beliefs. But what about PC_R? Is it true?

B. Are Appearances Sufficient for Justification?

Here's an example suggesting that PC_R is false, not because it says that a seeming that p is *necessary* for the justification of the human noninferential belief that p but because it says that it is *sufficient* for the justification of such a belief (when defeaters are absent and that belief is based on the seeming). Consider two humans, Jack and Jill. Suppose that, while grabbing a billiard ball, Jack has the tactile sensation we would expect a normal human to have in such circumstances. That tactile experience leads to a *seeming* that there's a hard spherical object in his hand; and that seeming then leads to the *belief* that there's a hard spherical object in his hand.

²⁰ These two principles differ in a number of ways from the version of PC that Huemer explicitly endorses (see note 1 above). However, it's not clear to me that Huemer would reject these principles. The main differences are (a) these principles are restricted to noninferential beliefs whereas PC is not, (b) these principles are explicitly presented as necessity claims whereas PC is not, (c) the focus here is on doxastic justification, not propositional justification, and (d) being based on a seeming is portrayed in these principles not only as sufficient but also *necessary* for noninferential justification (absent defeaters). Regarding (a), since these principles are entailed by corresponding principles that don't include the word 'noninferential,' there can be no sensible objection to including that restriction. Regarding (b), Huemer says (2001: 103) that PC, as he understands it, is a necessary truth. Regarding (c), if you think about what it would be natural for Phenomenal Conservatives to say about *doxastic* justification, the two principles in the text seem to be in keeping with the spirit of Huemer's version of PC that applies to propositional justification (see note 9 in this paper for the distinction between doxastic and propositional justification). Regarding (d), Huemer does insist that his version of PC is the *only* principle of noninferential justification, and concludes from this that the only thing that can override the evidence provided by a seeming is contradicting or undermining evidence provided by another seeming (see Huemer 2001: 99-100)

Assume further that Jack has no defeaters for this belief. Now suppose that Jill too has the same sort of seeming and, as a result, a belief that there's a hard spherical object in her hand. But, unlike Jack, Jill has no tactile experience of the sort that led Jack to have the seeming and belief about the hard spherical object. Instead, Jill's seeming about the hard spherical object was caused by an olfactory sensation she had that is phenomenally like one we'd have when smelling a lilac bush. She didn't learn to associate this seeming with this sensation. Instead, it was an automatic unlearned response that occurred as a result of brain damage.²¹ Jill too is without any defeaters for this belief. (We can, of course, imagine a case where she has some defeaters; but we can stipulate that in this case she doesn't have any—everything about her beliefs seems epistemically just fine to her, just as everything about Jack's beliefs seems epistemically just fine to him.²²) In this pair of cases, it seems that Jack's belief is perfectly reasonable and justified and that Jill's is not. Her seeming about the hard spherical object is improperly caused, and the result is that her corresponding belief about the hard spherical object is not justified. This assessment is supported by Objectivity, which tells us (a) that certain belief responses to experience are epistemically unfitting (Jill's in this case is certainly one of them) and (b) that such unfittingness won't disappear merely because that belief response feels right (either because it seems to the subject that the belief response to that experience is epistemically fitting or because that experience causes that belief to seem true).

Granting that a *justified human noninferential belief that p* is always caused by a *seeming that p* isn't enough to support PC_R. What matters for some justified human noninferential beliefs

²¹ Much of what I say in Bergmann (2006: 116-18) about learned and unlearned *belief* responses to experiences applies as well to learned and unlearned *appearance* responses to experiences. In particular, some automatic unlearned appearance responses to experience are epistemically appropriate and some are not.

²² It's true that it would be inappropriate for me to *stipulate* that Jill has no defeaters in this situation if the very fact that Jill's seeming is an unfitting response to her olfactory sensation counts as a defeater for the justification of the belief held in response to that seeming. But that fact (i.e., that Jill's seeming is an unfitting response) isn't something that removes justification Jill's belief previously had. Rather, that fact is something that prevents her belief from having any justification to begin with.

(e.g., perceptual beliefs) is that the belief that *p* is appropriately caused by a seeming that *p* and that that seeming that *p* is appropriately caused by an experiential ground to which the seeming and, derivatively, the belief are fitting responses. It's not enough for the justification of perceptual beliefs (not even a small degree of it) that the seeming that *p* appropriately causes the noninferential perceptual belief that *p*. Nor is it enough that the experiential ground appropriately causes the seeming that *p*. The noninferential perceptual belief is justified (to some degree) only if both the seeming and the belief with matching content are appropriately caused. Again, it's not that each of these two appropriate causings contributes some degree of justification. Rather, according to EFARA, it takes both of those appropriate causings in order for noninferential human beliefs to have any degree of justification. To be justified at all, such a belief must be an appropriate response to the experiential ground. And it isn't unless the belief is appropriately caused by the seeming *and* the seeming is appropriately caused by the experiential ground.

In short, according to EFARA, Contingency shows that PC_G is false and Objectivity shows that PC_R is false—appearances are neither necessary nor (even when beliefs are based on them in the absence of defeaters) sufficient for justification. Furthermore, EFARA says these things while also granting that a justified human noninferential belief that *p* is always caused by a seeming that *p* (which, at least in some cases, is caused by an experiential ground).

III. Objections

In this section I want to highlight the resources available to proponents of EFARA in addressing some objections that have been or could be raised against externalist positions that reject views like Phenomenal Conservatism.

Objection 1: EFARA Allows that Justified Belief is not Held Because of What Justifies It

EFARA grants that all justified human noninferential belief is held in response to or because of appearances (seemings). But, according to this objection, a belief is justified only if it is held *because of* what provides justification for it. To put it another way, if a belief is held in response to something that doesn't provide justification for it, then—even if the believer has some evidence or reasons that would provide justification—the belief isn't justified. From this it follows that unless a seeming that *p* is sufficient (absent defeaters) for some degree of justification for a belief that *p* held because of it, none of our noninferential beliefs is justified (since the only ones with a chance of being justified are held because of appearances). Huemer (2007:39-41) offers this objection to all views that deny Phenomenal Conservatism. If correct, this shows that EFARA is mistaken. For EFARA, in rejecting PC_R, says that it *isn't* sufficient (absent defeaters), for some degree of justification for a human belief that *p*, that such a belief is appropriately caused by a seeming that *p*. According to EFARA, when it comes to perceptual belief, if a seeming that *p* is itself an unfitting response to the experiential ground that causes it, then a noninferential belief that *p* held in response to that seeming is not justified at all.

How can a defender of EFARA respond? She can point again to the counterexample to PC_R . In that example, Jill's belief that p and Jack's belief that p are both held because of a seeming that p . The difference is that Jill's seeming that p is an unfitting response to her experiential ground whereas Jack's seeming that p is a fitting response to his experiential ground. This factor makes the difference, epistemically, between Jack's belief that p and Jill's; it's what makes his belief justified and hers unjustified. Does Jack hold his belief that p because the seeming that p , which causes his belief, is, *in fact*, a fitting response to his experience? Or would he, like Jill, hold the belief that p even if his seeming that p was an unfitting response to his experience? It seems that he would. But then there *is* a factor (i.e., the *seeming-that-p*'s being a fitting response to the experiential ground on which it's based) that contributes to the justification of Jack's belief that p even though Jack doesn't hold that belief because of that factor.

The problem with the objection, then, is its assumption that a belief is justified only if it is held *because of* what provides justification for it. Moreover, we can explain why that mistaken assumption might mistakenly seem attractive. Consider again Jack who has the experiential grounds consisting of the tactile sensations caused by grabbing the billiard ball. It's natural for us to say that such grounds could play a role in justifying his belief that he's holding a hard spherical object. But we'd insist that such a belief would be justified by that experience only if it was appropriately based on or held because of that experience. This sort of basing requirement on our beliefs' justification has some plausibility to it. But EFARA can accommodate it by noting that a human noninferential perceptual belief that p is justified only if it is appropriately caused by a seeming that p which is appropriately caused by some experiential ground to which that seeming is a fitting response. When this occurs, the belief in question is

appropriately based on that experience and, thereby, satisfies the relevant basing requirement. Thus, although this basing requirement for our beliefs is plausible,²³ the very similar but importantly different assumption on which the objection under consideration here relies is false.

Objection 2: EFARA Arbitrarily Treats Defeaters Differently than Justifiers

According to EFARA, it is possible for a belief that p to be justified even if it's not caused by a seeming that p. But a proponent of EFARA could concede that it's not possible for a *human* belief that p to be justified if it's not caused by a seeming that p.²⁴ Moreover, implicit in my earlier presentation of EFARA was the further requirement that, for a human noninferential perceptual belief that p to be justified, the seeming that p which causes that belief must be sufficiently stronger than any contrary seemings. Thus, if one comes to have a seeming that ~p that is stronger than one's seeming that p, and yet the weaker seeming that p continues to cause the belief that p, that belief ceases to be justified. Its justification is defeated by the stronger contrary seeming.

The objection under consideration here says that this combination of views causes trouble for EFARA given that (a) it allows that contrary (stronger) appearances are, of necessity, defeaters for human belief while at the same time (b) it denies that appearances (sufficiently stronger than any contrary appearances) are, of necessity, justifiers for human belief. The previous paragraph explains why (a) is associated with EFARA. As for (b), recall that,

²³ A basing requirement is more plausible as a requirement for the justification of our (human) beliefs than it is as a requirement on justification generally, for any belief of any possible cognizer. See Bergmann (2006: 61-62) where I argue against a basing requirement on justification generally and recommend in its place a "formed-in-the-right-way" requirement. I should be clear that, although I can see why a basing requirement on the justification of *human* beliefs seems plausible, my reasons for rejecting a *general* basing requirement on justification make me doubtful of (and so not committed to) the view that there is a basing requirement on the justification of human beliefs.

²⁴ That is, she could deny PC_R not because she thinks the appearance that p isn't *necessary* for the justification of a human noninferential belief that p (absent defeaters), but only because she thinks it isn't *sufficient*.

according to EFARA, it matters for the justification of a perceptual belief that *p* whether the seeming that *p* is a fitting response to the human believer's experiential ground. If it is unfitting, then even if it causes the belief that *p* and defeaters are absent, that belief won't be justified. (This was the point of the Objectivity-based objection to PC_R.) The worry behind this objection is that, by endorsing both (a) and (b), EFARA is arbitrarily demanding more of justifiers than of defeaters.²⁵

What can be said on behalf of EFARA?²⁶ Recall that earlier I mentioned that we might have conflicting seemings. When that happens and all is going well, the seeming that is the fitting response to the total evidence will be much stronger than the contrary seeming; and that stronger seeming will cause the person to believe its content. But consider what happens if things go wrong in the following two ways: first, the seeming that is the fitting response to the total evidence is much weaker than the contrary seeming; second, the weaker seeming causes the person to believe its content. For example, suppose that a human, Lisa, has an experience (a tactile experience, say, of the sort one has when holding a billiard ball) and that this causes in her a *seeming* that she's holding a hard spherical object, which in turn causes her to *believe* that she's holding a hard spherical object. So far all is going well. But later, in response to having an olfactory sensation phenomenally like the sort we have when smelling a lilac bush, Lisa comes to have a much stronger seeming that she's not holding a hard spherical object, and yet she continues to believe that she's holding a hard spherical object. What shall we say about such a case? The first thing to say is that, even though the stronger seeming to the contrary is not a

²⁵ A related objection is discussed in Bergmann 2006: 163-68, though there the discussion isn't limited in focus to human belief.

²⁶ One possible response is simply to modify EFARA so that it denies that it is *impossible* for a human belief that *p* to be justified if it's not caused by a seeming that *p* that is sufficiently stronger than any contrary seeming. (This response is compatible with acknowledging that there are no clear examples among actual human beliefs of a justified belief that *p* that is not caused by a seeming that *p*.) I find that sort of response quite tempting. But I want to argue that EFARA can be defended against this objection even if it didn't deny this.

fitting response to the olfactory sensation or Lisa's total evidence, it is also epistemically inappropriate that Lisa's belief is caused by the *weaker* member of a pair of conflicting seemings. Consequently, upon coming to have this stronger contrary seeming (with less impact on Lisa's belief than the original weaker seeming), Lisa's belief that she's holding a hard spherical object ceases to be justified. Its justification is defeated. Nevertheless, if, instead of the weaker seeming having its effect, the stronger seeming (that she was not holding a hard spherical object) caused Lisa to believe that she was not holding a hard spherical object, that belief would not be justified, according to EFARA, for that stronger seeming is not a fitting response to Lisa's experience. So in this case, whether or not her belief content matches the content of the stronger seeming, it will not be justified. Does this show any problem with EFARA?

Not at all. According to EFARA, a human noninferential perceptual belief that *p* is justified only if it satisfies each of the following three conditions: (i) an experiential ground causes the subject to have a *seeming that p* and that seeming is a fitting response to that ground, (ii) it is a fitting response to the subject's total evidence that this *seeming that p* is significantly stronger than any contrary seemings, and (iii) the *seeming that p* is sufficiently stronger than any contrary seemings and causes the belief that *p*. Now consider again the case of Lisa in the previous paragraph. According to EFARA, Lisa's initial belief that she's holding a hard spherical object is justified. This assessment is unproblematic because the belief satisfies all three of the conditions just mentioned. But if Lisa persists in believing that she's holding a hard spherical object even after coming to have the much stronger seeming that she is not, then, according to EFARA, her justification for that belief is defeated. This too is unproblematic. We can explain this loss of justification by noting that condition (iii) is no longer satisfied—her

belief is not caused by a seeming that is sufficiently stronger than any contrary seeming. What if instead, in response to her strong seeming that she was not holding a hard spherical object, Lisa *believed* that she was not holding a hard spherical object? EFARA says that this belief would not be justified either. But this too is easy to explain. For in such a case, although Lisa's belief satisfies condition (iii), it doesn't satisfy condition (ii)—it is not a fitting response to her total evidence that this seeming (that she is not holding a spherical object) is stronger than any contrary seemings. Nor does it satisfy condition (i), for the seeming that she's not holding a hard spherical object is an unfitting response to her "lilac bush" olfactory sensation.

Thus, although it's easier for defeaters to be present than it is for justifiers to be present, this difference is not arbitrary. A justifier is present (for human noninferential perceptual belief) only if all three of the conditions in the previous paragraph are satisfied and a defeater is present if even one of them changes from being satisfied to being unsatisfied.

Objection 3: EFARA is Committed to an Absurdity

Consider the case of Ruby who, in response to an olfactory sensation of the sort typically triggered in us by smelling a lilac bush, has a strong seeming that she's holding a hard spherical object in her hand and, as a result, *believes* that she's holding a hard spherical object. (She didn't learn to associate this seeming with this sensation. Instead, it was an automatic unlearned response that occurred as a result of brain damage.) Obviously something is going wrong with Ruby—she's a human and for humans, that sort of seeming is an unfitting unlearned response to that sort of experience. But we can add to this example that most of her other beliefs are fine. For example, Ruby also has an auditory experience of the sort one has when a large church bell

is ringing loudly in the vicinity. In response to that experience, Ruby has a strong seeming that something like a large bell is being struck nearby and, in response to this seeming, she *believes* that something like a large bell is being struck nearby. Neither of these two beliefs has any other source of support besides what has just been mentioned. Moreover, Ruby's seeming that she's holding a hard spherical object in her hand is just as strong as her seeming that something like a large bell is being struck nearby; in addition, it seems to Ruby that these seemings are equally fitting responses to the bits of experience that cause them. And in neither case does she have any defeaters for the belief in question (so, for example, she doesn't have any visual evidence that she's not holding a hard spherical object in her hand—perhaps she's blind or in total darkness).

Now, let's alter the Ruby example, but only in the following way: Ruby does *not* believe she's holding a hard spherical object, despite the fact that it seems to her very strongly that she is holding one, just as strongly as it seems to her that something like a large bell is being struck nearby. We can use this altered version of the Ruby example as the basis for an objection to EFARA—an objection according to which the proponent of EFARA is committed to approving of the following Absurd Speech given by Ruby:

Absurd Speech: It seems to me that I'm holding a hard spherical object, just as it seems to me that there's something like a large bell being struck nearby. These two seemings appear to me to be equally fitting responses to the bits of experiential evidence which cause them and, in general, seem alike in all epistemically relevant respects. However, I believe that there is something like a large bell being struck nearby, and I don't believe I'm holding a hard spherical object. I have no reason to think that the seeming that something like a large bell is being struck nearby is any more fitting a response than the seeming that I'm holding a hard spherical object. I just believe the content of the one and not the other, for no apparent reason.²⁷

Clearly, this Absurd Speech is not a rational thing to say. In fact, it's not even a rational thing to think. And yet, according to this objection, EFARA seems to commit its proponents to endorsing at least some instances of it. The reason EFARA-ites are supposedly committed to this Absurd Speech is that, in virtue of saying that Ruby's belief that she's holding a hard

²⁷ An objection of this sort is given by Huemer (see section 2 of his 2006).

spherical object is unjustified (given that it's the result of an inappropriately-based seeming), they are supposedly committed to saying that:

X: It is epistemically appropriate for Ruby *not* to believe she's holding a hard spherical object.

And if they're committed to X, they're committed to thinking there's nothing wrong with Ruby announcing in her Absurd Speech that she doesn't believe that she's holding a hard spherical object. Thus, this objection says that EFARA is unacceptable in virtue of the fact that it commits its proponents to endorsing such an irrational speech (or thought).

This objection fails to engage EFARA because EFARA is not committed to approving of this Absurd Speech. It's true that, according to EFARA, Ruby's belief (in the unaltered version of the example) that she's holding a hard spherical object is not justified. The reason for this is that the seeming in response to which her belief with the same content is held is not a fitting response to the experience that caused that seeming. However, it doesn't follow from this that EFARA says it would be epistemically appropriate for Ruby *not* to believe that she's holding a hard spherical object. Not believing that p is an epistemically unfitting response for us to a strong seeming that p (when there is no contrary seeming, as we stipulated is the case in the Ruby examples). So Ruby's not believing that she's holding a hard spherical object would be irrational in virtue of the fact that this would be an epistemically unfitting response to the strong (unopposed) seeming that she is holding a hard spherical object. What this shows is that, according to EFARA, X is false. Hence, it can't sensibly be argued that, because EFARA-ites think X is true, they're committed to approving of the Absurd Speech.

Objection 4: EFARA Doesn't Give a Unified Account of what Justifies our Beliefs

A belief's justification depends on how it is formed. In keeping with that idea, one might think that:

J: A belief's justification depends only on how it is formed in response to the subject's mental states.

Or one might reject J by saying that justification depends, at least in part, on what produces the subject's mental states and isn't itself a mental state. One reason to endorse J is that it is widely (and plausibly) thought that we're justificationaly equivalent to certain of our demon victim mental twins. The idea is that if some human were captured by an evil demon and given the same mental states that I have (including the same basing relations that hold among my mental states), that person's beliefs would be as justified as mine, even though that person's mental states are caused by the demon and not the external world. But even if we agree that the justification of our beliefs depends only on how they are formed in response to our mental states, the question arises: to which mental states must our beliefs be appropriate responses? One could follow Phenomenal Conservatism in concluding that what matters for the justification of our noninferential beliefs is only that they are appropriate responses to our seemings. Or one could instead follow EFARA in saying that for some noninferential beliefs, the seeming that produces the belief must itself be appropriately based on some experiential ground if the belief is to be justified. If we agree with J (as I do, due to reasoning like that used above in connection with the example of our demon victim mental twins), this gives rise to an objection to EFARA. The supposed problem is that EFARA allows that there could be cases of justified noninferential belief where the belief is based on a seeming that isn't based on any of the subject's other mental states. According to this objection, EFARA is forced, thereby, to hold a non-unified account of noninferential justification: it must say that in some cases noninferential justification depends on

seemings alone whereas in other cases it depends also on the experiential grounds on which those seemings are based. Phenomenal Conservatism allegedly has the advantage of being a simple and unified proposal focusing on what all cases of justified noninferential belief have in common, namely, that they are appropriate responses to our seemings.

There are a number of ways a defender of EFARA could respond to this objection. She could begin by denying J. But I accept J and think a defense of EFARA that grants J is to be preferred in the context of this paper because it grants more of Phenomenal Conservatism's assumptions. So I won't explore that sort of response to this objection. Instead, I will argue that, even while endorsing J, EFARA *can* offer a unified account of justification and that this account is more plausible than the one offered by Phenomenal Conservatism.

A unified account of justification that EFARA-ites can offer arises out of J itself in the form of the following principle:

J*: A belief is justified if and only if it is an epistemically appropriate response to all of the subject's mental states.²⁸

What's involved in a belief's being an epistemically appropriate response to the subject's mental states? A number of things. First, if it's the case that the belief epistemically should be based on a mental state, then it's justified only if it's based on a mental state—of the right sort. (In an example I gave earlier, Jill's belief that she was holding a hard spherical object was based on a mental state—namely, her olfactory sensation—but it wasn't based on a mental state of the right sort.) However, because I endorse the epistemic doctrine of Contingency, I think there are

²⁸ Given that I endorse J and J*, I need to replace the following account of justification given in Bergmann (2006: 133):

J_{PF}: S's belief B is justified iff (i) S does not take B to be defeated and (ii) the cognitive faculties producing B are (a) functioning properly, (b) truth-aimed and (c) reliable in the environments for which they were "designed".

In its place, I offer this slightly altered and (I hope) improved account:

J_{PF}*: S's belief B is justified iff (i) S does not take B to be defeated and (ii) the cognitive faculties producing B are (a) functioning properly *in response to all of S's mental states*, (b) truth-aimed, and (c) reliable in the environments for which they were "designed".

possible cases where a belief can be entirely epistemically appropriate even though it is not based on *any* mental states.²⁹ But even if a belief can be epistemically appropriate without being based on any mental state, it doesn't follow that it *can't* be an inappropriate response to the subject's mental states (so it doesn't follow that it is automatically justified according to J*). For there are other things involved in a belief's being an epistemically appropriate response to the subject's mental states. For one thing, the belief must not be inappropriately based on a mental state (such inappropriate basing could occur even in cases where it's false that the belief epistemically should be based on a mental state). In addition, the belief must not be held along with another mental state which counts as a defeater for it. Here what matters is not that the belief is inappropriately *based on* this other mental state. Rather, it's that the subject has this belief *along with* another mental state which counts as the belief's defeater—i.e., something which removes the belief's justification, something in response to which the subject should give up the belief in question. There are a number of ways in which this other mental state can be a defeater for a belief B. It can be a belief in the denial of B or it can be something to which the epistemically appropriate response is to believe the denial of B. It can be a serious doubt about how reliably B was formed or it can be something to which such doubt is the epistemically appropriate response. What matters for justification is just that the belief is an epistemically appropriate response to all of the subject's mental states, where this requires appropriate basing

²⁹ In Bergmann (2006: 63-64), I gave the following two examples of such beliefs. First, it seems that there could be rational beings to whom God reveals things by directly and reliably causing true beliefs to be formed in them, without using any mental states of the believers as intermediate causes of those beliefs. Such beliefs would be epistemically appropriate for them and yet not based on other mental states. Second, it seems that there could be alien cognizers who naturally form the belief that there is water nearby via a process that doesn't involve any other mental states. It may be that water in the environment of these aliens causes in them the belief that there is water nearby and that it does so without using any other mental states as intermediate causes of those beliefs. Moreover, it may be that these beliefs are not only reliably formed but also formed in a way that is natural and healthy for members of the species of which these aliens are members. In this sort of case too, it seems possible for such beliefs to be epistemically appropriate even though they are not caused by or based on any previous mental states of the believer.

(in cases where epistemic propriety requires that the belief be based on a mental state) and the absence of both inappropriate basing and being held along with mental states that are defeaters for the belief in question.

Notice that to require that a belief is an epistemically appropriate response to all of one's other mental states doesn't require that the belief is based on other mental states or even that the believer has any other mental states. In some cases, epistemic propriety requires that the belief is based on a seeming that, in turn, is based on an experiential ground. In other cases, epistemic propriety requires that the belief is based on a seeming which needn't be based on any experiential ground. In still other cases, the belief can be entirely epistemically appropriate without being based on any seemings—or, for that matter, on any mental states at all. But even in this last case, the belief must not be inappropriately based on some mental state or held along with a mental state that counts as a defeater for it. What all these cases have in common is what J* says: the belief is justified if and only if it is an epistemically appropriate response to all of the subject's mental states.

Thus, by endorsing J*, EFARA can offer a unified account of justification. Moreover, the account provided by J* is better than the one provided by Phenomenal Conservatism, which says that justification (for noninferential beliefs) depends essentially on seemings and only on seemings. For, as I noted in section II.A, it seems, in light of the doctrine of Contingency, that there are possible cases where a belief is entirely epistemically appropriate without being based on a seeming. This makes it plausible to think such beliefs are justified, contrary to what Phenomenal Conservatism says. And as I noted in section II.B, it seems, in light of the doctrine of Objectivity, that there are possible cases where, contrary to Phenomenal Conservatism, being based on a seeming with matching content isn't sufficient (absent defeaters) for the justification

of human noninferential beliefs. I conclude, therefore, that EFARA's account of justification in terms of J* is more plausible than Phenomenal Conservatism's account of justification solely in terms of seemings.³⁰

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