

Is Phenomenal Force Sufficient for Immediate Perceptual Justification?

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1. Introduction

Many philosophers now agree that perceptual experiences can provide us with justification for beliefs about the external world. What is still in dispute is: what kind of justification can they provide—for example, can they provide immediate justification? And in virtue of what do they provide such justification if they do at all? The view that will be called “dogmatism” in this paper adopts the following two theses about these questions:

The Immediacy Thesis: Perceptual experiences provide us with immediate justification for beliefs about the external world.

The Phenomenal Thesis: For any experience (e.g., perceptual, memorial, imaginative, etc.), if it has a distinctive kind of phenomenal character, then it thereby provides us with immediate justification for beliefs about the external world, where the phenomenal character of an experience is “what it is like” to undergo the experience.¹

Dogmatism is an important view partly because it promises to relieve us from a skeptical worry, which maintains that we need independent justification to rule out skeptical scenarios in

¹ Adherents of dogmatism include Bengson (2015), Brogaard (2013 and 2016), Chudnoff (2011, 2012, and 2013), Chudnoff and DiDomenico (2015), Huemer (2001, 2006, and 2007), Lycan (2014), Pryor (2000 and 2004), Silins (2014), Skene (2013), and Tucker (2010 and 2013). Some philosophers use “dogmatism” to only refer to the Immediacy Thesis, but Tucker (2013) points out that it is the Immediacy Thesis together with the Phenomenal

order to have justified beliefs about the external world.² According to dogmatism, having a distinctive kind of phenomenal character is sufficient for perceptual experiences to provide us with justification for beliefs about the external world. So we do not need antecedent independent justification to reject the skeptical scenarios. Moreover, dogmatism also promises to solve the regress problem, which challenges us to explain how we inferentially justify some beliefs based on other beliefs without slipping into an infinite regress.³ By arguing that perceptual experiences provide us with immediate justification, dogmatism makes perceptual experiences a basic source of justification and secures that our beliefs can be ultimately supported by our perceptual experiences.

In principle, the Immediacy Thesis and the Phenomenal Thesis can come apart because one can accept the former while rejecting the latter. For example, one might think that perceptual experiences provide us with immediate justification, but not in virtue of having a distinctive kind of phenomenal character. Instead, they do so in virtue of having an appropriate etiology, such as being produced by a reliable process.⁴ Or they do so in virtue of having a distinctive kind of phenomenal character together with an appropriate etiology.

In this paper, I will argue against dogmatism by rejecting the Phenomenal Thesis. I will grant that the Immediacy Thesis is true. Some empirical studies show that imaginings can have the distinctive phenomenal character dogmatists have in mind. However, some of the imaginings fail to provide us with immediate justification for beliefs about the external world at least partly due to their inappropriate etiology. In particular, I will argue that if an experience results from a process attributable to the person, then the quality of that process affects the justificatory power

² See Brogaard (2013 and 2016), Chudnoff (2001), Huemer (2001), Pryor (2000 and 2004), and Tucker (2013). It is worth noting that not all philosophers engaging with the closure-based skeptical challenge understand the nature of the challenge this way.

³ See Huemer (2001) and Tucker (2013).

⁴ Goldman (2008) and Lyons (2009) hold this view.

of the experience, and vice versa. The imaginings in question are experiences that we defectively create for ourselves. This at least partly explains why they fail to give us immediate justification. Such imaginings constitute counterexamples to the Phenomenal Thesis and hence to dogmatism.

Here is the plan for the discussion. In section 2, I will say more about dogmatism. In section 3, I will offer a detailed analysis of the distinctive phenomenal character dogmatists have in mind. In section 4, I will introduce the empirical studies, dismiss alternative explanations of them, and then pave the way for the subsequent epistemological discussion by considering what kind of imaginings are more suitable for having the distinctive phenomenal character. In section 5, I will present the argument against dogmatism by rejecting the Phenomenal Thesis from the epistemology of imagining. In section 6, I will consider and reply to some objections.

2. More Clarification on Dogmatism

Let's focus on a more specific version of the Phenomenal Thesis:

The Phenomenal Thesis: For any experience (e.g., perceptual, memorial, imaginative, etc.), if it has a distinctive kind of phenomenal character—namely phenomenal force—with respect to its content that P, then it thereby provides us with immediate prima facie justification for believing that P.

Several things need to be said about this thesis. To begin with, it assumes the “content view” of perceptual experiences, according to which perceptual experiences have propositional contents that are true or false.⁵ It also assumes that perceptual experiences can share the same contents with beliefs. There is a debate in the philosophy of perception about whether perceptual

⁵ For recent defenses of the content view, see Byrne (2009), Pautz (2010), and Siegel (2010 a and b). For recent criticism of the view, see Travis (2004).

experiences can represent “high-level” properties, such as being a hand, in addition to “low-level” properties, such as color, shape, and volume.⁶ For the sake of discussion, I will assume that perceptual experiences can represent high-level properties.⁷

Some philosophers argue that perceptual experiences contain separable components. They usually use “sensations/sensory experiences” to pick out the rich, fine-grained sensory states, and use “seemings” to pick out the states that involve categorization and interpretation of the sensory information.⁸ Moreover, according to this distinction, whereas seemings can have propositional contents and share the same contents with beliefs, sensations might lack propositional contents. Even if sensations have propositional contents, their contents do not need to match the contents of seemings. For example, seemings might represent objects as having high-level properties, but sensations might only represent low-level properties. For those who adopt the sensation-seeming distinction, the Phenomenal Thesis is a thesis about perceptual experiences broadly construed, where “perceptual experiences” pick out both sensations and seemings.

Second, the phenomenal character of an experience is “what it is like” to undergo it. For example, what it is like to see a dog is different from what it is like to see a flower, which is also different from what it is like to smell a flower. Moreover, what it is like to see a flower from a near distance is different from what it is like to see it from a far distance. These are differences in the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences. According to the Phenomenal Thesis, when a perceptual experience provides us with immediate justification for believing that P, it does so

⁶ For defenses of the view that perceptual experiences only represent low-level properties, see Clark (2000), Dretske (1995), Reiland (2014), and Tye (1995). For defenses of the view that perceptual experiences can also represent high-level properties, see Peacocke (1992), Siegel (2006), and Siewert (1998).

⁷ Our rejection of dogmatism does not depend on the last assumption. If perceptual experiences only represent low-level properties, then the Phenomenal Thesis is about how perceptual experiences justify beliefs about low-level properties. We can instead focus on such beliefs in our argument against dogmatism.

⁸ Adherents of the sensation-seeming distinction include Bengson, Grube, and Korman (2011), Brogaard (2013), Conee (2013), Lyons (2005, 2009, and 2015), Reiland (2014 and 2015), and Tucker (2010 and 2013). For recent criticism of this distinction, see Chudnoff and DiDomenico (2015).

by having a distinctive kind of phenomenal character with respect to the proposition that P. Dogmatists call such phenomenal character “phenomenal force,” but they are usually vague about what phenomenal force consists in. I will discuss this in more detail in the next section.

Third, the Phenomenal Thesis claims that the justification provided by perceptual experiences is *prima facie* and immediate. It is *prima facie* because it can be defeated by additional evidence. For example, having a visual experience that it is raining provides you with *prima facie* justification for believing that it is raining. However, if you later learn that you were actually hallucinating, it can defeat the justification you acquire from your visual experience and prevent you from having all-things-considered justification. Moreover, the relevant justification is immediate. In the current example, your visual experience that it is raining is the basic source of your justification for believing that it is raining.

Finally, epistemologists usually distinguish between propositional justification and doxastic justification. Here is a rough characterization: propositional justification is about having good reason for believing a proposition, whereas doxastic justification focuses on using the good reason properly to form and maintain a belief. Suppose that both you and I see that it is raining. Whereas you believe that it is raining based on your visual experience, I believe so out of wishful thinking. We both have propositional justification because we both have good reason from our visual experiences for our beliefs, but only you have doxastic justification because only you use the reason properly to form your belief. The Phenomenal Thesis is primarily concerned with propositional justification. I will use the same notion in this paper.

3. Phenomenal Force

Dogmatists think that perceptual experiences provide us with immediate justification by having phenomenal force. But what does phenomenal force consist in? In this section, I offer a detailed analysis of dogmatists' account of phenomenal force.

Let me begin by explaining what an account of phenomenal force needs to do for dogmatism. First, it needs to distinguish perceptual experiences from other mental states, such as beliefs and deliberate imaginings, which are thought incapable of providing us with immediate justification for *non-modal* beliefs about the external world (non-modal beliefs about the external world are in contrast with modal beliefs about the external world. An example of the former is “There is a desk,” whereas an example of the latter is “It is possible that there is a desk”).⁹ If phenomenal force turns out to be something that beliefs or deliberate imaginings also have, then it is arbitrary to claim that only perceptual experiences provide us with immediate justification.¹⁰ Second, a satisfactory account of phenomenal force needs to elucidate why having phenomenal force makes perceptual experiences provide immediate justification.

In discussing their view, most dogmatists provide some remarks on what phenomenal force consists in, but their remarks suggest at least two different accounts. One account focuses on the “assertiveness” of perceptual experiences:

I think there is a distinctive phenomenology: the feeling of seeming to ascertain that a given proposition is true. This is present when the way a mental episode represents its content makes it feel as though, by enjoying that episode, you can thereby just tell that that content obtains. (Pryor 2004, p. 357)

⁹ Kind (forthcoming) argues that some imaginings can provide us with justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world. My view in this paper is not necessarily contradictory to this view. I will explain it more in the final section, where I consider possible objections to my argument.

¹⁰ Ghijzen (2014) calls this the “distinctiveness problem.”

The reason lies in what I call the ‘forcefulness’ of perceptual experiences: perceptual experiences represent their contents as actualized; states of merely imagining do not. (Huemer 2001, p. 77)

What distinguishes seemings from other experiences is their peculiar phenomenal character. Huemer (2001: 77-9) refers to this character as ‘forcefulness’ but I prefer the name ‘assertiveness.’ Tollhurst (1998) says that seemings, “have the feel of truth, the feel of a state whose content reveals how things really are” (298-9). The phenomenology of a seeming makes it feel as though the seeming is “recommending” its propositional content as true or ‘assuring’ us of the content’s truth. (Tucker 2010, p. 530)

In these passages, dogmatists seem to take phenomenal force as analogous to the assertiveness of testimony. Perceptual experiences, like testimony, represent their contents in such a way that they assure the subjects of their contents’ truth.

As mentioned earlier, a satisfactory account of phenomenal force needs to distinguish perceptual experiences from beliefs and deliberate imaginings. The assertiveness account seems to do so. When we deliberately imagine seeing a desk, our imagining is not assertive. It does not assure us that there is a desk. Similarly, we lack a feeling of assuredness in believing that there is desk. We might have such a feeling when our belief is based on a visual experience. But strictly speaking, the assuredness is not from our belief but rather from our visual experience.

Bengson (2015) argues that perceptual experiences are “presentational.” He describes presentation as “a conscious state or event that... directly and immediately presents the world as being a certain way” (p. 708). Although Bengson does not spell out the metaphor of direct and immediate presentation, he does at one place say the following things about the presentationality

of intuitions: “the presentationality of intuition is arguably clearest in the case of basic logical and mathematical theorems, which, as Kurt Gödel famously observed, sometimes ‘force themselves upon us as being true’” (p. 719). This indicates that Bengson also takes perceptual experiences as assertive and to represent their contents in such a way that they assure the subjects of the contents’ truth.

However, the assertiveness account is not the only account of phenomenal force in the existing literature. Chudnoff (2011, 2012, and 2013) think that the assertiveness account does not go deep enough in revealing the nature of phenomenal force. He proposes that phenomenal force instead consists in an association between two different phenomenal properties:

What it is for an experience of yours to have presentational phenomenology with respect to p is for it to both make it seem to you that p and make it seem to you as if this experience makes you aware of a truth-maker for p . (Chudnoff 2013, p. 37)

To give an example, according to Chudnoff’s account, your visual experience has phenomenal force with respect to the proposition “There is a desk” just in case it visually seems to you that there is a desk and it visually seems to you as if you are item-aware of a desk, where the item “desk” is a truth-maker for the proposition “There is a desk.”

As I understand it, the first phenomenal property that Chudnoff has in mind—“seeming to you that P”—corresponds to the phenomenal property picked out by the assertiveness account. What makes Chudnoff’s account different is that he thinks that phenomenal force also requires the realization of a second phenomenal property—“seeming to be item-aware of a truth-maker for P.” Chudnoff does not discuss much about what the realization of this second phenomenal

property consists in, but he seems to think that it involves a feeling of being assured that the relevant item is really there:

On the face of it, if you seem to be aware of a tiger, for example, you represent the tiger as actual—it is really there. But you can objectually imagine a tiger without representing the tiger as actual. (Chudnoff 2012, p. 62)

Again, Chudnoff's account seems to distinguish perceptual experiences from beliefs and deliberate imaginings, not only because, as explained earlier, beliefs and deliberate imaginings lack assertiveness, but also because they lack the second phenomenal property that Chudnoff has in mind. For example, when we deliberately imagine seeing a desk, we do not have a feeling of assuredness that the desk is really there. Nor do we have such a feeling in merely believing that there is a desk.

So far, I have explained dogmatists' accounts of phenomenal force. It is out of the scope of this paper to determine which account is superior. Later when I argue that some imaginings can have phenomenal force, I will show that these imaginings can have phenomenal force according to both the assertiveness account and Chudnoff's account. But let's now consider some different questions: Why is phenomenal force epistemically significant? Why does having phenomenal force make perceptual experiences provide us with immediate justification?

Some dogmatists contend that when our experience has phenomenal force with respect to the proposition that P, from our point of view, our experience assures us that P. If we have no special reason to doubt the reliability of the experience, then we at least have some reason to believe that P.¹¹ Moreover, dogmatists sometimes press the following questions to support their view: what is reasonable to believe when our experience has phenomenal force with respect to

¹¹ See Bengson (2015), Huemer (2001), and Tucker (2013).

the proposition that P and we have no defeaters for it? Is it reasonable to suspend judgment or disbelieve our experience for no good reason? They argue that neither suspending judgment nor disbelieving seems reasonable and the only reasonable attitude is to take our experience at face value.¹²

4. Imaginings with Phenomenal Force

In the introduction, I pointed out that if we can show that some experiences have phenomenal force but fail to provide us with immediate justification, then we can show that the Phenomenal Thesis and hence dogmatism are false. In the rest of this paper, I present such an argument. In this section, I argue that it is possible for imaginings to have phenomenal force. In the next section, I argue that some imaginings with phenomenal force fail to provide us with immediate justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world.

So far, I have been relying on our common understanding of what imaginings are. Before proceeding to argue that imaginings can have phenomenal force, I think that it is helpful to make some clarification on what I mean by “imagining.” This term is used in many different ways in philosophy and other areas.¹³ Here I use it to designate perception-like experiences that are not caused by the appropriate external stimuli. However, to say that imaginings are not caused by the appropriate external stimuli is not to say that no external stimuli play any causal role at all in the generation of imaginings. When it is not raining and we imagine seeing rain, our imaginings is not caused by the appropriate external stimuli—rain. But other external stimuli, such as black clouds and swaying trees, can nonetheless play some causal role in our having the imagining.

¹² See Huemer (2001) and Tucker (2013).

¹³ For different uses of “imagining,” see Gendler (2011) and Kind (2013).

Moreover, imaginings can be caused by our cognitive states, such as beliefs and expectations. For example, our expectation that it will rain can cause us to imagine seeing rain; our suspicion that our safety is in danger can cause us to imagine hearing a gunshot. These are the kind of imaginings I will focus on in my rejection of dogmatism. Another distinction to be made is between deliberate imaginings and spontaneous imaginings. Whereas some imaginings are caused deliberately, other imaginings arise spontaneously and just pop into our mind, such as in the case of daydreaming.¹⁴ As we will see later in this section, spontaneous imaginings seem more suitable for having phenomenal force than deliberate imaginings.

To argue for the possibility that imaginings can have phenomenal force, I first draw your attention to a recent argument that perceptual experiences can lack phenomenal force (Ghijsen 2014 and Siegel and Silins 2015). It is based on a classic experiment conducted by C. W. Perky (1910). Although this argument does not directly show that imaginings can have phenomenal force, it shows that perceptual experiences can be confused for imaginings due to lack of phenomenal force, and hence leads naturally to the question whether the confusion could occur in the reverse direction, in which imaginings are confused for perceptual experiences due to having phenomenal force. I will argue that the confusion can occur in the reverse direction and this shows that imaginings can have phenomenal force.

In Perky's experiment, the participants were asked to imagine a few objects, such as a banana, and a leaf, while unbeknownst to them, faintly colored shapes of those objects were projected onto the screen where they were fixated. The projected shapes influenced the participants' experiences—for example, they reported having an image of an elm leaf when an elm leaf was shown on the screen, and they reported having an image of a vertically oriented banana when a vertically oriented banana was shown on the screen. However, the participants

¹⁴ See Walton (1990) for a similar distinction between deliberate imaginings and spontaneous imaginings.

claimed that they were just imagining. A natural explanation is that they saw those projected shapes, but their visual experiences lacked phenomenal force that perceptual experiences usually have. That is why they mistook their experiences for imaginings, which usually lack phenomenal force.

This explanation is not uncontroversial. An alternative explanation is that the participants' visual experiences of the projected shapes had phenomenal force, but they failed to distinguish those experiences from imaginings. According to our earlier analysis of phenomenal force, both the assertiveness account and Chudnoff's account take a necessary condition of an experience's having phenomenal force to be that the experience assures the subject of its contents' truth. But Perky reported that almost all the participants expressed great surprise or even indignation when asked whether they were certain that they imagined all the things that they reported (see Perky 1910, p. 431 and p. 433). This suggests that their experiences did not make them feel as if they were assured of the contents' truth. Otherwise why would they confidently take the experiences as imaginative? So we have reason to dismiss the alternative explanation.

If Perky's experiment demonstrates that perceptions can be mistaken for imaginings due to lack of phenomenal force, could there be cases in which imaginings are mistaken for perceptions due to the presence of phenomenal force? As I see it, C. E. Seashore carried out experiments to produce such imaginings (see Scripture 1896 and Seashore 1895. For more recent experiments that were similar to Seashore's, see Davies et al. 1982, Ellson 1941 a and 1941 b, and Hefferline et al. 1971. See Bentall 1990 for a brief history of such experiments). In one experiment, the participants were asked to walk slowly toward a white ring where a blue bead was suspended, and were asked to check their distance from the white ring once they detected the bead. After

some trials, the bead was secretly removed, but the participants still reported seeing the bead when they walked past the usual distance.

One explanation of Seashore experiments is that after a few trials, the participants formed expectations about what they would perceive when certain external conditions were met. When those conditions were apparently met in the subsequent trials, their expectations triggered them to imagine with phenomenal force the relevant stimuli, despite that the stimuli were not there. Seashore himself endorsed this explanation, and so did Caver-Lemley and Reeves (1992).¹⁵

One might also argue that an alternative explanation of Seashore's experiments is that the participants' imaginings lacked phenomenal force, but they failed to distinguish their imaginings from perceptions, which normally have phenomenal force. However, according to Seashore's reports, the participants were hardly convinced when informed about the experiments afterwards. One participant even said that he had a distinctive experience of the absent stimulus, although he was suspicious of the experiment before participating in it (see Seashore 1895, p. 32). These reports suggest that the imaginings did make the participants feel as if they were assured of the contents' truth, and did make them feel as if they were aware of the absent stimuli. According to both the assertiveness account and Chudnoff's account, the imaginings had phenomenal force.

Another alternative explanation of Seashore's experiments is that the participants' experiences were not triggered by their cognitive-level expectations, but rather by some mechanistic subpersonal-level processes. Given that I will focus on imaginings that are caused by

¹⁵ Seashore (1895) wrote: "The fact that the experimenter performed apparently the same manipulations that in the preparatory trials had produced a distinct sensation, formed the definite suggestion that, since the conditions were *in toto* repeated, the resultant sensation would recur in the same time and manner as before. By force of a firm expectant attention, caused by this inference, the image of the sensation realized itself into the peripheral organs. And in the positive instances, the observer felt it just as he expected to feel it, although there was no physical stimulus." (p. 32) "They [the participants] knew when, where, and how to see the bead, and this was sufficient to project the mental image into a realistic version." (p. 47) Caver-Lemley and Reeves (1992) also mentioned the same explanation of Seashore's experiments: "Scripture's [Seashore's] subjects, expecting to see the bead, might have unwittingly imagined it." (p. 635)

our cognitive states in my argument against dogmatism, I need to say something to reply this alternative explanation.

Ellson (1941 a and 1941 b) conducted experiments similar to Seashore's, in which the participants were asked to detect a tone after seeing a signal light. In one experiment, the participants first performed the task without knowing that later the tone would not appear after the signal light appeared. Then they performed the task again with such knowledge. It turned out that fewer participants heard the tone in the latter trials than in the former trials, which suggests that the participants' cognitive-level expectations affected their experiences. Moreover, both Seashore's experiments and Ellson's experiments employed a classical (Pavlovian) conditioning model to generate experiences. Research showed that conditioning relies heavily on cognitive-level expectations (See Bentall 1990, Brewer 1974, Kirsch et al. 2004, Rescorla 1988 and 1991, and Tolman 1932 and 1948).

Now one might point out that even if the cognitive explanation is true, it remains an open question whether the participants' experiences of the absent stimuli were imaginative or not. Recently, some psychologists and philosophers have argued that cognitive states can influence our perceptual experiences—they have called such top-down effects “cognitive penetration.”¹⁶ It is possible that in Seashore's experiments, the participants' expectations did not cause them to have imaginings of the absent stimuli, but rather caused them to have visual experiences of the absent stimuli by cognitive penetration. This possibility undermines our claim that it was the participants' imaginings that had phenomenal force.

¹⁶ For some defenses of cognitive penetrability, see Cecchi (2014), Churchland (1988), Hohwy (2013), Macpherson (2012), and Vetter and Newen (2014). For rejections, see Deroy (2013), Firestone and Scholl (2015), Fodor (1984 and 1988), Pylyshyn (1999), and Raftopoulos (2001). For further discussions on the issue, see the anthology *The Cognitive Penetrability of Perception: New Philosophical Perspectives*, edited by Zeimbekis and Raftopoulos (2015).

I have to acknowledge that this is a powerful objection. To it, I reply two things. First, we have not been offered any convincing argument that the experiences in question were cognitively penetrated perceptual experiences rather than imaginings. Davies et al. (1982) also employed a classical conditioning model to generate experiences, but they argued that their participants had visual experiences. In the experiment, the participants were presented with an equilateral triangle after hearing a tone. After many trials, all the participants reported seeing the triangle before the onset of the visual stimulus. Moreover, they still reported having the experiences after the onset of the visual stimulus.

Davies et al. argued that the participants' experiences were not imaginings by appealing to the findings of S. J. Segal and her colleagues, according to which deliberate imagining tended to reduce detection sensitivity and to be disrupted by verbal description (see Segal 1971 and 1972, Segal and Fusella 1969, and Segal and Gordon 1969).¹⁷ Since Davies et al. did not observe such effects in their experiment, they rejected that the experiences were imaginings.

However, Segal and her colleagues argued that when imagining interfered with perception, it also assimilated elements from the perceptual stimulus. It is consistent with this finding that in Davis et al.'s experiment, the participants started to imagine the triangle before the onset of the visual stimulus, but they nonetheless assimilated some elements from the perceptual processing into their imaginings after the onset of the stimulus. This explains why they continued reporting having the experience after the onset of the visual stimulus. Moreover, Segal and her colleagues focused on deliberate imaginings. But if the experiences in Davies et al.'s experiment were

¹⁷ One might use these findings to argue that Perky's experiment should not be understood as that the participants' visual experiences lacked phenomenal force, but rather that they failed to have conscious visual experiences in the first place. I want to point out that there is an important difference between the set-up of Perky's experiment and that of Segal and her colleagues' experiments. Whereas Perky had the shapes shown on the screen before the participants successfully called up imaginings, Segal and her colleagues had the shapes projected only after the participants had successfully called up imaginings. It is plausible that Perky's participants had seen the projected shapes before the interference of imagining kicked in.

imaginings, then they should be spontaneous imaginings. Segal and her colleagues did not show that spontaneous imagining also tended to interfere with perception or to be interfered by verbal description. Third, there has been empirical evidence that imagining could facilitate perception. Farah (1985 and 1989) and Pearson et al. (2008) showed that imagining the same object made the participants perceive the visual stimulus more accurately.¹⁸

My second reply to the cognitive-penetration explanation is that even if in Seashore's experiments, the participants' expectations caused them to have visual experiences of the absent stimuli, a further question to ask is: through what psychological mechanism does such cognitive penetration takes place? Macpherson (2012) proposes that imagining plays an important role in cognitive penetration, and I (forthcoming) defend this proposal in another place. According to this proposal, in cognitive penetration, some cognitive states activate an imaginative experience or an imaginative process that would normally lead to such an experience. Then the imaginative experience or process interacts with the perceptual experience or process to produce a perceptual experience that is a mixture of the two experiences or has contributions from both processes.

Moreover, according to this proposal, the resulting experiences from cognitive penetration feel just like other ordinary perceptual experiences, and the subjects cannot tell which parts are caused by imagining and which parts are caused by perception by the phenomenal character. If such a proposal about cognitive penetration is correct, then it to some extent suggests that some imaginings can have phenomenal force. This actually supports my conclusion, though in a more indirect way.

So far, I have argued that phenomenal force can be present in imaginings. Before ending this section, I want to say something about what kind of imaginings can have phenomenal force.

¹⁸ For other empirical studies on the facilitation effects of imagining on perception, see Ishai and Sagi (1995 and 1997), Michelon and Koenig (2002), and Michelon and Zacks (2003).

First of all, I think that spontaneous imaginings are more suitable for having phenomenal force than deliberate imaginings. Consider the blue bead case again. If the participants' imagining had phenomenal force, then an important reason seems to be that the participants' imagining arose spontaneously and the participants were unaware that their expectation was the cause. On the other hand, when we deliberately imagine something, we are usually aware that the source of our experience is from within. This seems to be a major reason why deliberate imaginings lack phenomenal force.¹⁹

5. The Argument against Dogmatism

In this section, I argue that some imaginings with phenomenal force fail to provide us with immediate justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world at least partly due to their inappropriate etiology, so the Phenomenal Thesis and dogmatism are false.

To begin with, consider the following case of deliberate imagining:

¹⁹ Some dogmatists seem to think that the vivacity and specificity of an experience can influence the phenomenal force of the experience (see Bengson 2015). What those dogmatists have in mind should not be that if an experience is highly specific and vivid then it has phenomenal force, otherwise it does not have phenomenal force. For some perceptual experiences are not so vivid or specific, such as the perceptual experiences of people with poor eyesight, but those perceptual experiences can still have phenomenal force. On the other hand, some imaginings are very vivid and specific, such as the imaginings of people who are good at calling up eidetic mental images, but those imaginings can still lack phenomenal force. Such considerations show that vivacity and specificity does not determine whether an experience has phenomenal force.

But what do those dogmatists have in mind? As I see it, they have in mind that once an experience has phenomenal force with respect to some content, specificity and vivacity can influence the strength of the phenomenal force with respect to that content. Compare two visual experiences of the same book: one is had by a person with poor eyesight and only represents the shape of the book, whereas the other is had by a person with good eyesight and represents not only the shape of the book, but also the title and author of the book, its being on a wooden bookshelf, etc. If both experiences have phenomenal force with respect to "There is a book," the phenomenal force seems stronger in the good-eyesight experience than the poor-eyesight experience. It follows from such a view that when imaginings have phenomenal force, specificity and vivacity can also influence the strength of the phenomenal force.

However, such a view is controversial since one might think that phenomenal force is an on/off thing: your experience either represents some content with phenomenal force or it does not. According to this alternative view, the two book experiences above have just as much phenomenal force with respect to "There is book." What distinguishes between them is that the good-eyesight experience in addition has phenomenal force with respect to various other propositions, such as "The book is on a bookshelf," "The title of the book is..." etc. (I thank Susanna Siegel and Nico Silins for pressing this point). It is beyond the scope of this paper to decide which of these views on phenomenal force is correct. But in case one thinks that specificity and vivacity can make a difference to the strength of phenomenal force, I will consider how specificity and vivacity influence the justificatory power of imaginings with phenomenal force in a footnote in the next section.

Deliberate Rain Imagining: Sam expects that it will rain, so he deliberately imagines seeing rain when he looks out the window. The imagining is not so specific or vivid. Moreover, it lacks phenomenal force with respect to “It is raining.” Sam forms the belief that it is raining based on his imagining.

Clearly, Sam does not have immediate justification from his imagining for believing that it is raining. Why? One explanation is that in deliberately imagining the rain, Sam knows that the source of his experience is from within, so he has evidence that he is not seeing the rain. This evidence is a defeater of the justification provided by his imagining for believing that it is raining.²⁰ According to this explanation, Sam has prima facie justification from his imagining, but because he is aware that he is imagining, the prima facie justification fails to constitute all-things-considered justification. I do not find this explanation adequate since Sam seems to lack prima facie justification in the first place.

To further support this point, compare Sam with Ted, who wants to get a job so badly and hence forges an offer letter for himself. Apparently, Ted lacks justification for believing that he is offered the job. We can ask whether Ted has prima facie justification from reading the letter for believing that he got the job but his knowledge about his role in creating the letter defeats the justification, or he even lacks prima facie justification in the first place. My intuition is that he even lacks prima facie justification. Suppose that months later Ted comes across the letter in the bottom drawer of his desk and does not remember whether it is fake, and hence loses the defeater. It seems to me that Ted still lacks justification from reading the letter for believing that he got the job. We need something else than defeaters to explain why this is the case.

²⁰ For general discussions of defeaters, see Bergmann (2006), Egan and Elga (2005), Kotzen (2013), Pollock (1987, 1995, and 2001), Pollock and Cruz (1999), and Pryor (2013). For a detailed discussion of defeaters of experiences, see Silins (2014).

The second explanation claims that Sam lacks immediate justification for believing that it is raining due to the poor phenomenal character of his imagining. There are at least two ways to spell this explanation out. On the one hand, one might argue that Sam's imagining is less specific and vivid than an ordinary visual experience of rain. That is why Sam fails to have immediate justification for believing that it is raining.²¹ This view is false. Some visual experiences are no more specific or vivid than some imaginings, but these visual experiences can still have different justificatory power from the imaginings. For example, when someone with poor eyesight sees a book, he can still have immediate justification for believing that there is book, whereas when he has a more specific and vivid visual imagining of a book, he can still lack immediate justification for believing that there is book.²²

On the other hand, one might contend that it is because Sam's imagining lacks phenomenal force that Sam does not have immediate justification for believing that it is raining. The underlying logic of this explanation seems to be that had Sam produced the imagining with phenomenal force, the imagining would have the same justificatory power as an ordinary visual experience of rain. In order to evaluate this explanation, we need to consider an imagining with phenomenal force. As discussed in the previous section, spontaneous imaginings are more suitable for having phenomenal force than deliberate imaginings. In Seashore's blue bead case, if the participants' imagining of the missing blue bead had phenomenal force, an important reason seems to be that the imagining arose spontaneously and the participants were unaware that their expectation was the cause.

In light of this analysis, let's consider a spontaneous version of Sam's rain imagining:

²¹ David Hume famously argues for this view.

²² See Siegel and Silins (2015).

Spontaneous Rain Imagining: Sam expects that it will rain, which causes Sam to spontaneously imagine seeing rain when he looks out the window. The imagining is not so specific or vivid. But partly due to its spontaneity, it has phenomenal force with respect to “It is raining.” Sam forms the belief that it is raining based on his imagining.

Does Sam here have immediate justification for believing that it is raining? I think not. Consider the offer letter case again. Suppose that Ted is unfamiliar with the writing style of offer letters and writes one in colloquial English. According to the logic of the above explanation, Ted does not have justification for believing that he is offered the job because the letter is poorly written—it should be composed in more formal English. However, had Ted been more familiar with the style of offer letters and forged a letter that looked exactly like an authentic one, I would still doubt that the letter provides him with justification. What goes wrong in this case is not only that the letter falls below a certain quality standard, but also, more importantly, that it is Ted who creates the letter. Offer letters are the kind of things that provide us with justification only when we do not fabricate them for ourselves. Ted fabricates the letter for himself, so it should not give him justification.

As I see it, the deliberate rain imagining case and the spontaneous rain imagining case are problematic in a similar way. Experiences provide us with immediate justification for beliefs about the external world only when we do not fabricate them for ourselves. Because Sam’s rain imagining is caused by his expectation through a semantically intelligible route, the generation of the imagining is attributable to Sam, and the imagining should count as an experience that Sam

fabricates for himself. I think that this is true even for the spontaneous rain imagining case.²³ To see the latter point, consider that some belief inferences happen spontaneously and the subjects often lack awareness that they make these inferences. But we nonetheless attribute the inferences to the subjects and take their quality to affect the justificatory power/status of the inferred beliefs. Likewise, I doubt that spontaneity makes the generation of Sam's rain imagining not attributable to Sam. If the rain imagining is an experience that Sam fabricates for himself, then it should not provide him with immediate justification, just as Ted's forged offer letter should not provide Ted with justification.

Of course, if an experience results from a process that is only influenced by subpersonal states, such as the information in the perceptual system, then the generation of the experience is uncontroversially subpersonal and is not attributable to the subject. I think that whether a process leading to a mental state is attributable to the subject makes an important epistemic difference: if it is not attributable, then its quality does not affect the justificatory power/status of the resulting mental state, and vice versa. To demonstrate this point, consider that if an inference leading to a belief is attributable to you, then the inference's quality influences the justificatory power/status of your resulting belief. On the other hand, if a crazy scientist inferred from P to Q and instilled the belief that Q into your mind, we would not think that the quality of the scientist's inference influences the justificatory power/status of your belief that Q. Similarly, if the generation of an experience is not attributable to the subject, then it does not have the problem Sam's imagining has and can still provide the subject with immediate justification.

²³ The phrase "through a semantically intelligible route" is important. Consider that your expectation to see apples causes you to imagine seeing a cat, or that your expectation that it will rain causes you to imagine seeing tiny people walking on the carpet. One might think that as such imaginings get more and more spontaneous, it becomes more and more vague whether we can attribute the relevant etiology to you rather than to some subpersonal system (I thank Matthew McGrath for pressing this point).

Now we have seen that the spontaneous rain imagining case constitutes a counterexample to the Phenomenal Thesis and hence to dogmatism. This case shows that having an experience with phenomenal force is not sufficient for having immediate justification for beliefs about the external world. In order for an experience to provide such justification, it is at least necessary for the experience to have an appropriate etiology—namely we do not fabricate the experience for ourselves.²⁴

6. Objections and Replies

In this section, I consider and reply to three possible objections to our argument. First, one might argue that if Sam's spontaneous rain imagining has phenomenal force then it is just like a hallucination. However, we usually take hallucinations to have the same justificatory power as ordinary perceptual experiences and to provide us with immediate justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world. Therefore, one might argue, Sam's spontaneous rain imagining is not a counterexample to the Phenomenal Thesis or dogmatism.

In reply to this objection, I first point out that it is controversial whether hallucinations have the same justificatory power as ordinary perceptual experiences do. Moreover, even if some

²⁴ Suppose that specificity and vivacity can affect the strength of phenomenal force. How do specificity and vivacity influence the justificatory power of imaginings with phenomenal force? Dogmatists might construe the relationship between the strength of immediate justification and the strength of phenomenal force in two ways. On the one hand, they might take the strength of immediate justification as proportionate to that of phenomenal force: the stronger the phenomenal force of an experience is, the more immediate justification the experience provides (see Bengson 2015, Huemer 2007, and Tucker 2010). On the other hand, they might reject that the strength of immediate justification varies with the strength of phenomenal force, but instead take all experiences with phenomenal force to provide us with the same amount of immediate justification. Either way, they adhere to the basic idea of the Phenomenal Thesis that phenomenal force is sufficient for immediate justification.

Once we clarify that the inappropriate etiology of Sam's rain imagining at least partly prevents the imagining from providing him with immediate justification, it is not difficult to argue that specificity and vividness makes little difference to the justificatory power of the imagining. Suppose that Sam's spontaneous rain imagining is more vivid and specific and has stronger phenomenal force. As long as the imagining is caused by Sam's expectation through a semantically intelligible route, it would still be an experience that Sam fabricates for himself, and hence fails to give him immediate justification.

hallucinations have the same justificatory power as ordinary perceptual experiences do, this is at least partly because those hallucinations are produced by processes that are not attributable to the subjects. For example, in one version of the brain-in-a-vat (BIV) case, the BIV's hallucinations are triggered by a supercomputer directed by some crazy scientists, and hence the hallucinations are not attributable to the BIV. This helps explain why the BIV has immediate justification, if it has any, for various beliefs about the external world. Sam's spontaneous rain imagining, on the other hand, is caused by his expectation. It fails to provide Sam with immediate justification at least partly because Sam fabricates the experience for himself. It might be the case that on some definitions of hallucination, the imagining counts as a hallucination,²⁵ but this does not change what justificatory power it possesses.

Second, one might acknowledge that Sam's spontaneous rain imagining is epistemically defective due to its inappropriate etiology, but nonetheless deny that the imagining is defective in the sense that it fails to provide Sam with immediate justification. One might clarify that having justification for a doxastic attitude consists in its being reasonable to adopt that attitude. If Sam's spontaneous rain imagining has phenomenal force with respect to "It is raining," and Sam has no defeaters to doubt his experience, then from Sam's point of view, the reasonable doxastic attitude for him to take is to believe that it is raining—What else could it be? This suggests that Sam does have immediate justification, although the inappropriate etiology of his imagining prevents him from acquiring some other positive epistemic statuses, such as knowledge.

The critic seems to assume that whether one has justification for a doxastic attitude merely depends on mental states immediately accessible to one. Now given that in the spontaneous rain

²⁵ A usual definition in psychology takes hallucinations as perception-like experiences that are not caused by the appropriate external stimuli but nonetheless have phenomenal force just like ordinary perceptual experiences do (see Farkas 2013 and Slade and Bentall 1988). According to this definition, Sam's spontaneous rain imagining is also a hallucination.

imagining case, the inappropriate etiology of Sam's imagining is not immediately accessible to Sam, the critic thinks that it should not affect the justificatory power of the imagining. However, this assumption is questionable. Consider again belief inferences that occur spontaneously and of which the subjects usually lack awareness. Such inferences can also be immediately inaccessible to the subjects, but we nonetheless think that the quality of the inferences affects the justificatory status the inferred beliefs.²⁶

One might still wonder which attitude Sam is reasonable to take in the spontaneous rain imagining case—whether he only has immediate justification for suspending judgment. I think that the distinction between propositional justification and doxastic justification is relevant to the answer here. To refresh our memory, propositional justification focuses on having good reason for a belief, and doxastic justification focuses on using the reason properly to form and maintain a belief. In the spontaneous rain imagining case, Sam lacks immediate propositional justification for either believing or disbelieving that it is raining since the imagining is an experience that Sam fabricates for himself. He only has immediate propositional justification for suspending judgment.

In the spontaneous rain case, Sam forms the belief that it is raining based on the imagining, but since he lacks immediate propositional justification for either believing or disbelieving that it is raining, he also lacks immediate doxastic justification for taking either of these attitudes. Now if he instead suspended judgment, would he then have immediate doxastic justification for doing so? I think that the answer is still “No.” Although Sam has immediate propositional justification for suspending judgment, because the inappropriate etiology of his imagining is not accessible to him, he is not really in a position to use the reason he possesses to suspend judgment. To sum up, if we talk about propositional justification, then Sam has immediate justification for suspending

²⁶ Cf. Jackson (2011) and McGrath (2013).

judgment. But if we talk about doxastic justification, then none of belief, disbelief, or suspending judgment is immediately justified for him to take.

Finally, one might point out that some deliberate imaginings seem to provide us with immediate justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world. One example is that you try to determine whether a square fits into a circle by imagining placing the former on top of the latter. If your imagining suggests that the square fits into the circle, then it seems to provide you with immediate justification for believing so. Another example is that you try to figure out how two colors—say a shade of red and a shade of yellow—interact with each other by imagining mixing them on the canvas. If your imagining suggests that the resulting color is a certain shade of orange, then it seems to provide you with immediate justification for believing so. One might think that cases like these pose a challenge to our discussion of the epistemology of imagining.²⁷

In reply, I argue that the non-modal justification in question is *mediate*, and poses no threat to our view that imaginings do not provide us with immediate justification. To see this point, it is helpful to consider a different case, in which you are supposed to determine whether a square fits into a circle, but something blocks your vision so you cannot see these figures. With nothing that you can do to remove the block, you instead imagine a random square and a random circle, and imagine placing the former on the top of the latter. Now even if your imagining suggests that the imagined square fits into the imagined circle, it does not give you justification for believing that the blocked square fits into the blocked circle since you do not know whether the blocked figures are of the same sizes as those you imagine. Suppose that later you come to know that they are of the same sizes. You then seem to acquire justification for the belief. However, the justification is *mediate* since it depends on your justification for the new information.

²⁷ I thank Nico Silins for raising these cases to me. Also, as mentioned in fn. 9, Kind (forthcoming) argues that some imaginings can provide us with justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world.

I think that this case sheds light on how we should understand the non-modal justification in the original square-circle case and the color-mixture case. In the original square-circle case, your justification for believing that the square fits into the circle depends on your justification for believing that the figures stacked by your imagining are of the same sizes as those you see. It is just that you already have the latter justification when imagining, whereas in the compared case you do not acquire the justification until later. The same seems true with the color-mixture case. If our understanding is correct, then the original square-circle case and the color-mixture case at best show that imaginings can mediate justify non-modal beliefs about the external world. But this does not contradict our view that imaginings cannot immediately justify such beliefs.²⁸

7. Conclusion

Dogmatism proposes that for any experience, if it has phenomenal force, then it thereby provides us with immediate justification for external world beliefs. In this paper, I have argued that imaginings can have phenomenal force, but some of them fail to provide us with immediate justification for external world beliefs at least partly due to their inappropriate etiology. I have argued that the imaginings in question are experiences that we fabricate for ourselves. This at least partly explains why they fail to give us immediate justification. These imaginings constitute counterexamples to dogmatism.

One thing that I have not done in this paper but I would like to do in the future is to offer a more thorough analysis of what is inappropriate about the etiology of Sam's rain imagining that makes the imagining fail to provide immediate justification. Another thing that I would like to do

²⁸ Spaulding (2016) rejects that we can gain non-modal knowledge merely through imaginings, but her reason is that imaginings only reveal possibilities and need to be supplemented with background information in order to produce knowledge about the actual world. This argument further supports that imaginings at best provide us with mediate justification for non-modal beliefs about the external world.

in the future is to give a positive story of what is a sufficient condition for immediate perceptual justification—for example, whether having a perceptual experience with phenomenal force and an appropriate etiology is sufficient. Finally, I have granted that perceptual experiences can provide immediate justification in this paper, but this thesis might be contested.

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