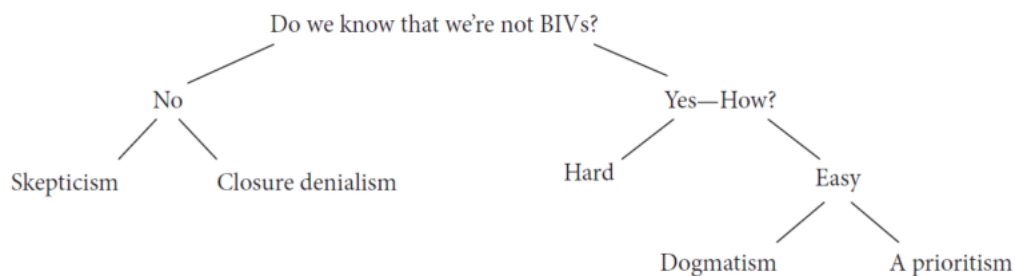


Phil. 270/570, 11/11: Conservatism, Part 4: Dogmatism, Siegel, and Cognitive Penetration

1. What is dogmatism?: Broad vs. Narrow

-the term, in its recent philosophical uses, derives from James Pryor, "The Skeptic and the Dogmatist," *Noûs*, 2000. "Uses": its meaning varies a lot. Huemer is usually counted as a "dogmatist."

-We'll use "narrow dogmatist" to denote someone who gives Pryor's answer to the question: "How do we know that radical skeptical hypotheses are false – e.g., how do you know that you're not a BIV?", which answer seems to be: via a simple inference from our perceptual beliefs about the external world. Here is an array of positions one might take on whether, and, if so, how, we know that we're not BIVs:



(App. of Ig, p. 231)

(Narrow) dogmatism is there on the bottom, right portion of the chart, right next to my position, on which we know \sim BIV a priori. We may have occasion to talk of these options later. For now, if you're really interested, see Chapter 7 of *The Appearance of Ignorance*.

-In considering the chart of options, it might be handy to have in front of us this standard form of skeptical argument:

1. I don't know that not-H
 2. If I don't know that not-H, then I don't know that O ←closure
- So, C. I don't know that O

The top decision point on our chart is over whether to accept the skeptical argument's first premise

-Now on to broad dogmatism, which doesn't go by one's answer to the particular, odd question of how we know that radical skeptical hypotheses are false. We can start with Siegel's characterization at p. 208 of our Reading 11:

“Dogmatism is called ‘dogmatism’ because of the response to skepticism that it recommends. It consists of two main claims. First, absent defeaters, having a perceptual experience with content *p* suffices to give you justification for believing *p*. Second, when a subject *S*’s experience justifies believing *p*, the justification is immediate”

-but we need to specify the nature of some of the *p*’s: perceptual beliefs about the external world

-and we need to specify some of the things that don’t count as successful defeaters: skeptical hypotheses, in normal circumstances. (As a broad dogmatist, one can be non-committal on how skeptical hypotheses fail to be defeaters. I think it’s against the spirit of dogmatism to take the “hard” option [that skeptical hypotheses fail to be defeaters because the subject has come up with some Descartes-like proof against them: that would only work for select subjects (at best)]; but we can construe the broad dogmatist as neutral between the two “easy” options; that is, between narrow dogmatism and aprioritism.)

-I think Siegel may be worried mostly about evidentialist skeptics (like Berkeley), in which case, dogmatism’s claim that the justification for our perceptual beliefs is immediate cuts off the evidentialist skeptical argument. But once we start worrying about skeptics who use arguments from skeptical hypotheses, the dogmatist also needs that immediate justification not to be killed via a defeating skeptical hypothesis (unless and until the believer comes up with some “hard”-to-come-by defeater of the defeater)

2. Siegel’s “attack on [broad] dogmatism”: “This paper addresses these questions by concentrating on a simple and popular theory of perceptual justification known as dogmatism. I will argue that there are cases in which dogmatism predicts that a cognitively penetrated visual experience can elevate the subject from an epistemically bad situation to an epistemically better one, yet in which it is implausible to suppose that such epistemic elevation takes place” p. 202.8

-warm-up: gossip circle, p. 202.5

-the case of “Angry-looking Jack,” p. 202.3, 209.9

Next time... more Siegel, on to readings 12 and 13