Recap

(1) You don’t (can’t) know that you’re not a handless BIV.

(2) If you know that you have hands, you (can) know that you’re not a handless BIV.

(C) You don’t (can’t) know that you have hands.

Reliabilism denies (1): if the world is as we usually take it to be, we can form a belief that we’re not handless BIVs by combining a reliable process (perception of our hands) with a conditionally reliable one (deduction).

Lines of attack: (a) even granting reliabilism, this response is unsatisfactory; (b) reliabilism is false.

What motivated (1)?

(8) To know anything based on experience, you already have to know that e.g. you’re not a BIV.

This is an instance of principle SPK from Pryor (2000) “The Sceptic and the Dogmatist”, which is roughly: ‘If you’re to know p based on experiences E, then for every q which is ‘bad’ relative to E and p, you already have to know that q is false.’

(C”) You can’t know you’re not a BIV based on experience (so, since you can’t know it a priori either, you can’t know it at all).

(8) vs (2): the crucial ‘already’

Reliabilists reject (8): to know something based on experience, it’s sufficient that your senses really are reliable – you don’t need to also know that they are.

But *that* move doesn’t require reliabilism, or even externalism!

Dogmatism

The view: whenever you have an experience as of p, you thereby have immediate, prima facie justification for believing p.

Immediate = not dependent on justification for other claims

Prima Facie = defeasible, but there until defeated

Experience as of hands → justification to believe I have hands → justification to believe I’m not a (handless) BIV. If all else is going well, the justification leads to knowledge. (1) is false.
Begging the Question, Again

Sceptics claim that the reasoning towards ‘I’m not a handless BIV’ is question-begging, since the transition from ‘I seem to have a hand’ to ‘I have a hand’ presupposes what we ultimately want to establish. But dogmatists deny that it presupposes this, hence deny that it is question-begging.

We thus have disagreement about epistemology – but that’s fine. A reflective dogmatist can lay out his justification in a way the sceptic can accept (though she’ll disagree whether it’s any good). A reflective reliabilist cannot.

Is this an advantage? Maybe not: means we don’t have a good error theory for why (1) seems true.

(Other) Problems for Dogmatism

Arguments from probabilities:

a. If H entails E, Pr(H|E) > Pr(H). So, if H entails E, E cannot justify you in becoming less confident of H, hence cannot justify you in becoming more confident of \( \neg H \).

b. \( Pr(\neg(E \& \neg H)) > Pr(H|E) \). So if E justifies H, you must have had prior justification for \( \neg(E \& \neg H) \).

(Do reliabilists do better? Not if E=’I seem to have a hand’. But maybe yes if E=’I have a hand’.)

Worries about bad etiology: what if it only seems to me that p because

a. I already (irrationally) believed p?

b. I would really like for p to be true?

Summing Up

Three responses:

- Deny (2), and Closure more generally.
- Deny (1), on reliabilist grounds.
- Deny (1), on dogmatist grounds.

A common feature: none even attempt to give new reasons for thinking that sceptical scenarios don’t obtain; instead, they attempt to explain why we don’t need such reasons to have ordinary knowledge.

All of the responses reject otherwise attractive-looking principles. So maybe they won’t end up more attractive than scepticism in the end?

Maybe not so odd for philosophy to overturn common-sense. Scientific revolutions rely on epistemic claims, so provide a precedent.