

# WHITNEY KANE

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## EDUCATION

**PhD, Philosophy, Duke University** In progress, expected graduation: Spring 2016

Areas of Specialization: Epistemology, Ethical Theory, Applied Ethics

Areas of Competence: Political Philosophy, Logic

**Certificate in College Teaching, Duke University** In progress

Completed both philosophy-specific and general courses on college teaching: learned about effective teaching strategies, syllabus and materials design, how to develop and apply grading criteria appropriately, and how to utilize instructional technology. Also participated in a teaching observation and review process with peers, and created an online teaching portfolio.

**B.A., Triple Major in Philosophy, Mathematics, and English, Vanderbilt University** 2008

Graduated *Magna Cum Laude*

## DISSERTATION

**Title:** Dogmatism about Emotion

**Chair:** Gopal Sreenivasan

**Committee Members:** Jennifer Hawkins, Karen Neander, & Walter Sinnott-Armstrong

### Abstract

The issue of whether seemings can justify beliefs has been the subject of many recent debates in epistemology. In the literature on seemings, philosophers often suggest that seemings can be sorted into different categories. For instance, Michael Huemer distinguishes between perceptual, memory-based, and intellectual seemings, and other species of seemings that philosophers have recognized include introspective, ethical, and emotional seemings. Some philosophers have suggested, not only that there *are* differences between species of seemings, but also that there are *epistemically significant* differences between species of seemings. For instance, some philosophers argue that not all species of seemings are equally capable of justifying beliefs. One view that has been especially popular is dogmatism about perception, according to which, if it perceptually seems to S that p, then—in the absence of counterevidence—S is justified in believing that p. In my dissertation, I investigate the connection between *emotional* seemings and justified belief. More specifically, I attempt to answer the following questions: When the way that things seem to us is significantly influenced by our emotions, are we justified in believing that things are, in fact, the way that they seem—at least assuming that we lack counterevidence? If emotional seemings are capable of justifying beliefs, under what conditions do they confer justification (for instance, does it depend on the content of the belief in question, the context, etc.)?

## HONORS, FELLOWSHIPS & SERVICE

**Graduate Fellow, Kenan Institute for Ethics** 2010 – 2011

Met weekly with an interdisciplinary group of faculty members, other graduate fellows, and visiting speakers—all with research interests in the area of ethics—to present and discuss our work.

**Research Assistant to Allen Buchanan** 2011 – 2012

Performed wide range of research tasks. Provided feedback on works in progress, sought out factual information, summarized journal articles, and collected resources.

**Judge, National Undergraduate Bioethics Conference**

2011

Judged undergraduate debates about various controversies and case studies in medical ethics. Evaluated arguments for soundness of reasoning, focus on and sensitivity to ethically relevant factors, and thoughtfulness of deliberation.

**Graduate Student Representative to the Faculty**

2011 – 2012

Selected to represent the philosophy graduate students at faculty meetings.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE****Primary Instructor**

Introduction to Philosophy – Ethics Focus (PHIL.104S)	Fall 2012, Spring 2013
Logic (PHIL.150)	Fall 2013
Introduction to Philosophy – General (PHIL.103S)	Spring 2014

**Teaching Assistant – Graduate Courses**

Clinical Research Ethics (GLHLTH.330)	Spring 2012
Primary Instructors: Gopal Sreenivasan, Jennifer Hawkins, & Ross McKinney	

**Teaching Assistant – Undergraduate Courses**

Knowledge and Certainty (PHIL.110), Primary Instructor: Michael Ferejohn	Spring 2012
Introduction to Metaphysics and Epistemology (PHIL.41), Primary Instructor: Michael Ferejohn	Fall 2011
Introduction to Ethics (PHIL.44S), Primary Instructor: Yolonda Wilson	Fall 2011
Medical Ethics (PHIL.118), Primary Instructor: Jennifer Hawkins	Spring 2011
Human Rights (PHIL.162), Primary Instructor: Allen Buchanan	Fall 2010

**DISSERTATION CHAPTER SUMMARIES****Chapter 1: Objections to my view**

In Chapter 1, I identify what I consider to be the most threatening objections to the claim that emotional seemings can justify beliefs. These objections come from two major sources. One source is the recent philosophical literature on phenomenal conservatism and dogmatism about perception. Phenomenal conservatism is the view that, if it seems to S that p, then—in the absence of defeaters—S is justified in believing that p. Dogmatism about perception is the view that, if it *perceptually* seems to S that p, then—in the absence of defeaters—S is justified in believing that p. The literature on phenomenal conservatism raises objections to the claim that emotional seemings can justify beliefs which apply in virtue of the fact that emotional seemings *are seemings*. The literature on dogmatism about perception raises objections to this claim which apply in virtue of the fact that emotional seemings *have something in common with perceptual seemings*. The second major source of objections is the recent philosophical literature on affective epistemology. One might think that, while some kinds of seemings can justify beliefs, *emotional* seemings cannot. It might be the case that emotional seemings face a unique set of problems—problems that do not pertain to other kinds of seemings. Affective epistemologists argue that some affective state can play a role in helping us obtain beliefs with some positive epistemic characteristic, and most have identified *emotions* as being the affective state that is of epistemological significance. Thus, critics of affective epistemology raise concerns about the ability of emotional seemings to justify beliefs which arise due to the fact that emotional seemings are *emotional*.

**Chapter 2: What are seemings?**

Whether emotional seemings are capable of justifying beliefs depends on what exactly seemings are. Many philosophers have recently devoted attention to elucidating the nature of seemings—identifying what exactly seemings are, and how seemings as a group differ from other kinds of things, such as beliefs or desires. The

prominent views can be roughly classified into four types: (1) special attitude views, (2) special content views, (3) extra phenomenal character views, and (4) inclination views. In the second chapter of my dissertation, I describe each of these kinds of views and then present and defend my own view.

### **Chapter 3: What distinguishes species of seemings? What is an *emotional* seeming?**

In the recent work on seemings, philosophers often suggest that seemings can be sorted into different categories. For instance, Michael Huemer distinguishes between perceptual, memory-based, and intellectual seemings, and other species of seemings that philosophers have recognized include introspective, ethical, and emotional seemings. Although they frequently identify different categories of seemings, philosophers have not spent a great deal of time explaining the basis upon which they draw the distinctions that they do. In fact, I am not aware of any serious attempt to articulate the nature of the differences between various species. Instead, philosophers usually offer examples of the species that they acknowledge and expect that their audience will appreciate their taxonomy. However, gaining a deeper understanding of how the various species differ from one another would be valuable for a number of reasons, and in the third chapter of my dissertation, I attempt to identify distinguishing characteristics of each kind of seeming and explain why this is an important endeavor. In particular, I clarify what an emotional seeming is and what sets emotional seemings apart from other kinds of seemings.

### **Chapter 4: Replies to objections**

Equipped with a clear picture of what constitutes an emotional seeming, in the fourth chapter of my dissertation, I consider whether the major objections discussed in Chapter 1 can be surmounted.