

HOW VISUAL PERCEPTION YIELDS REASONS FOR BELIEF

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1.

Consider a simple case of perceptual knowledge. Suspecting that we might have run out of tomatoes I go to the kitchen to check. I see that, and thereby know that, there are tomatoes in the basket in which we usually keep them. The fact that there are can constitute, or contribute to constituting, a reason for me to believe other things. For instance, I now have reason to think that I don't yet need to buy more tomatoes. One way, then, in which perception can yield reasons for belief is through putting us in contact with facts that can play a reason-constituting role. My particular interest here is in the question how my perception of the tomatoes in the basket puts me in a position such that I have reason to believe that there are tomatoes in the basket and, in that way, a justification for so believing.

The view I defend is a commonsense one. The fact that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket explains how I know that there are and also constitutes a reason I have to believe that there are. Not only does this fact constitute a reason I have to believe, it is a reason for which I now believe that there are tomatoes in the basket.¹ No doubt for some time afterwards it will continue to be a reason for me to believe this and a reason for which I believe it. It is not that I encounter the fact that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket and am thereby prompted to believe that there are in view of that reason. That cannot be the right picture in this case. Since it is constitutive of seeing that there are tomatoes in the basket that I believe that there are, it cannot be that I come to believe that there are in response to being apprised of the fact that I see that there are. Rather, I am in a position such that the reason I have to believe plays a role in sustaining the belief: were a question to arise as to whether there are tomatoes in the basket I would be liable to

resist any suggestion that there are not in view of the fact that I see that there are, and were I to cease to believe that I see that there are then, all else equal, I'd cease to believe that there are.

All this seems pretty straightforward but from the perspective of mainstream epistemology the narrative I have given is unsatisfying if not problematic. It certainly raises questions about the situation described.

- (1) What is it to see that there are tomatoes in the basket?
- (2) What is involved in knowing that there are tomatoes in the basket?
- (3) How does seeing that there are tomatoes in the basket relate to knowing that there are?
- (4) How is the fact that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket accessible to me so that it can serve as my reason to believe that there are?
- (5) Let e be the stretch of visual experience I have as I look at the tomatoes. Can we account for the widely held intuition that I could be as justified in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket as I am in the scenario described, were I to believe this on the basis of an experience such that it looks to me just as if there are tomatoes in the basket, and that is otherwise indistinguishable from e , but which is not produced by looking at tomatoes in the basket, and perhaps not by looking at anything at all? The experience might be a hallucination, or it might be produced by looking at things in the basket that look like, but are not, tomatoes.

I shall outline what I take to be plausible answers to each of these questions and contrast the position outlined with another that is more congenial to mainstream epistemology and which accounts for resistance to the line that I pursue.

2.

The answer to (1) is that seeing that there are tomatoes in the basket is a matter of seeing the tomatoes in the basket, recognizing them to be tomatoes and in the basket. Recognition in this case is the exercise of a specific visual-recognitional ability—the ability to recognize tomatoes in a basket as tomatoes in a basket from the way they and the basket look. That ability depends on being able to recognize tomatoes to be tomatoes from the way they look and being able to recognize baskets to be baskets from the way they look, and being able to recognize certain tomatoes and baskets to be such that the former are in the latter. These are abilities one is not bound to have just in virtue of possessing the concept of tomatoes, the concept of a basket and the concept of being in a basket. Those who lack sight do not have these abilities but might for all that possess those concepts. To

acquire the abilities one has to learn the specific skill of applying the concepts correctly to what one sees. One acquires the ability only if one comes to be very highly reliable in this respect and error has some special explanation such as inattention or confusion or the presence of a rare dead ringer for what one took oneself to see.

The answer to (2) draws on the idea that to possess the recognitional abilities in question is to have mastered certain ways of telling. These ways of telling have to do with telling, which is coming to know, of certain things one sees, from the way they look, that they are of such-and-such a kind or have such-and-such properties. In this case I have a way of telling of the tomatoes that they are tomatoes and telling of certain other things that they are baskets, and telling of things in baskets that the former are in the latter. The upshot is that in exercising the relevant recognitional abilities I both see that there are tomatoes in the basket and thereby tell that there are and so know that there are.² Indeed, seeing-that is just a mode of knowing-that.³ So we already have an answer to question (3).

It merits emphasis that exercising the relevant recognitional abilities is nothing less than coming to know. Just as I exercise the ability to ski if and only if I ski, so I exercise the ability to tell that there are tomatoes in the basket if and only if I tell, thus come to know, that there are. The fallibility associated with recognitional abilities consists in not always exercising them when we aspire to do so, not in sometimes exercising them but failing to come to know.⁴

The answer I have given to the first three questions will not satisfy those who seek a reductive conceptual-analytical account of knowledge since the explanation of the knowledge in the given case adverts to considerations about recognitional abilities that implicate the concept of knowledge. Providing such an account is not the business I am in, and like Timothy Williamson (2000), I think that the project is hopeless. It is clearly informative to learn that someone knows that there are tomatoes in the basket through exercising the recognitional abilities I envisage myself deploying in the case described. The explanation explains one thing—coming to know a certain thing—in terms of something else that is antecedently understood—an ability to come to know things of that sort in a certain specified way, that is, by looking. A person could come to know the same thing in a different way, through exercising different abilities. For instance, someone might be able to tell that there are tomatoes in the basket by feeling the tomatoes and the basket, or through being told. There is plenty of philosophical work to do to clarify the nature of the abilities.⁵

I take it to count in favour of my answers to (1)-(3) that they deploy easily comprehensible and relatively familiar concepts in a natural way. We are familiar with the notions of seeing-that, telling-that, and knowing-that and with the idea that seeing that *p* is a reason to believe that *p*. We are far less familiar with the notions invoked by mainstream epistemological theory.

(I have in mind especially the kind of framework concerning the justification of perceptual beliefs that I outline in section 4.) That matters since our account of perceptual knowledge should help us to make sense of ordinary attributions of perceptual knowledge to ourselves and to others.

Not all philosophers agree that seeing-that is a mode of, or entails, knowing-that. Suppose that, as John McDowell (2002: 277–79) has argued, one can see that p without believing that p .⁶ Then, if knowing that p entails believing that p , it follows that one can see that p without knowing that p . McDowell imagines a person in a shop with artificial lighting thinking that her current visual experience does not put her in a position to tell the colour of the tie at which she is looking. He thinks it would be perfectly intelligible (and presumably also felicitous) for such a person to say later, on realizing that she was wrong, ‘I thought I was looking at the tie under one of those lights that make it impossible to tell what color things are, so I thought it merely looked green to me, but I now realize that I was seeing it to be green’ (McDowell 2002: 277). McDowell is explicit that seeing the tie to be green is to be understood to be the same as seeing that the tie is green. On this view seeing that the tie is green falls short of knowing that it is (again on the assumption that knowing entails believing.) Does McDowell’s example force us to conceive seeing-that as falling short of knowing that? I do not myself feel the intuitive force that McDowell takes it to have and see no awkwardness in denying that the subject saw that the tie was green.

This at least is true. In the example the person certainly sees the tie, and she sees that it looks green. She also sees its colour though it is only with hindsight that she realizes that it was green, and so the colour it looked to be. McDowell claims that she saw that the tie was green. If that were just a way of summing up the description I have just given then my quarrel would be merely terminological. But McDowell wishes to make a stronger claim connected with the thought that ‘the appearance that the tie was green that [this person’s] experience presented her with [was] an appearance that was actually the fact that the tie was green making itself visually available to her’ (McDowell 2002: 278).⁷ This suggests that in saying that she saw that the tie was green McDowell seeks to capture the idea that the subject confronts or encounters the fact despite not taking it for a fact.⁸ Let it be granted that the very idea of confronting or encountering a fact is inextricable from the idea of the fact’s being made available to that subject. Even so, if this subject does not take the fact for a fact, in what sense is it made available to her? She encountered the tie, it looked green and, as it turned out, was green, but there is a clear sense in which the fact was not available to her: it was not such that, without further ado, it was at hand to be exploited in thought and action. This being so there seems to be no compelling reason to take her to have encountered the fact that the tie was green. It was not available to her in *that* clear sense since she did not take the tie to be green and it is not clear that it was made available in some other way. The subject has abilities

to recognize of colours, in suitable surroundings, that they are the colours that they are. Despite her reservations, she was in surroundings conducive to discerning the colours of objects and did see the tie's colour. What she saw would have put her in a position to know that the tie was green, but for her reservations. Absent her reservations, what she saw would have prompted the exercise of her ability to recognize certain colours to be green from the way they look. None of this, it seems to me, adds up to the fact being available to her in the envisaged situation.⁹ There seems to be nothing for an encounter with the fact that the tie is green to be short of taking it that the tie is green.

Aside from the foregoing, no strain is put on ordinary ways of speaking by using 'sees that' to capture a mode of knowing, such that when one knows in that way the thing known is available to the subject to be exploited without further ado. I shall persist in taking seeing that p to be a mode of knowing that p and therefore to entail that p . I shall take both to be explained as the exercise of the requisite recognitional abilities—those linked to the concepts that figure in the content of the seeing and of the knowing.

Quassim Cassam (2007: 343–47; 2009: 581) has argued that the claim that seeing-that entails knowing-that is irrelevant to accounting for how it is that one can explain someone's knowing that p in terms of her seeing that p . It is certainly right that the entailment does not suffice to account for how one's seeing that there are tomatoes in the basket explains one's knowing that there are. For even if, say, ' S admits that p ' entails ' S knows that p ' the claim that S admits that p does not explain S 's knowing that p . On my account, however, it is not simply the entailment that is doing the explanatory work. Rather, seeing that a is G explains knowing that a is G because (i) seeing that a is G is the exercise of an ability to recognize of certain things from the way they look that they are G , (ii) the exercise of that ability is the deployment of a way of telling of those things that they are G from the way they look, and (iii) the upshot of such a deployment in the case in hand is knowledge that a is G —the telling is nothing short of coming to know. It falls out of this account that seeing that a is G entails knowing that a is G but the explanatory work is effected by the invocation of recognitional abilities.

So far so good, but the remaining questions, (4) and (5), take us into problems that might seem to undermine the general approach I am taking.

3.

Granted that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket and that, this being so, the fact that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket can serve as a reason for me to believe that there are, and so justify me in believing that there are, still, it might be thought that the interesting story about justification in this scenario must lie elsewhere. There is a problem here that is liable to seem acute.

The problem arises if we combine the idea that seeing-that is a mode of knowing-that with a key strand in mainstream epistemology. At least since the fifties of the previous century, epistemological tradition has encouraged us to look for explanations of knowledge—of what constitutes knowledge—in terms of justified belief plus other factors. From this perspective it looks bizarre to suppose that we can give a satisfying account of what justifies me in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket in terms of me seeing that there are, if seeing that there are is a mode of knowing that there are. That would be to account for the justification for believing that there are tomatoes in the basket in terms of a mode of knowing that very thing. From the perspective under consideration the right order of understanding is from the justified belief that *p* to the knowledge that *p*, not vice versa. So, if we are to explicate knowledge that *p* in terms of being justified in believing that *p*, we should be able to account for the justification independently of knowledge that *p*. But this requirement obviously cannot be met if seeing that *p* just is a mode of knowing that *p* and provides the justification for believing that *p* in cases in which one knows that *p* in virtue of seeing that *p*.

In the light of these considerations it might easily look as if we need an answer to the question as to what justifies me in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket that does not advert to the reason constituted by the fact that I see that there are. This is what the opposition will have suspected all along and there is a story they can tell that fits the bill. For they can say that my justification for believing that there are tomatoes in the basket derives ultimately from the visual experiences on which this belief is based. It is crucial that these are conceived in a particular way. The idea is that as I look at the basket in question I have a series of visual experiences such that it looks just as if there are tomatoes in it. These experiences are conceived to be such that it is possible that I should have had them even if there were no tomatoes there and, indeed, even if my surroundings were completely different from how they visually seem to be. So the claim that I have an experience such that it looks to me just as if there are tomatoes in the basket is non-committal as to how things stand in my surroundings and in this respect contrasts sharply with the claim that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket. Following this line of thought there opens up the prospect of explaining both what justifies me in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket, and what justifies me in believing that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket, in terms of me having appropriate visual experiences, and in that way avoiding the problem. If we take this route we give up the perspective that I am defending and with it the claim that the best answer to what justifies me in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket is simply that I see that there are. But we do not have to take that route.

The problem arose because we were working with the mainstream assumption that knowledge that *p* is always posterior in the order of understanding to justified belief that *p*. We can make sense of the phenomena

if this assumption is rejected and rejecting it puts no strain whatsoever on familiar ways of talking about knowledge.

Recall that the explanation I gave in section 2 of what is involved in knowing that there are tomatoes in the basket made no mention of believing that there are, far less of being justified in so believing. The explanation was in terms of recognitional abilities understood as knowledge-acquisition abilities. This takes us into the heart of the matter. For, while it highlights what looks like an oddity from the standpoint of mainstream epistemology, it draws attention to a methodological assumption that is contestable and, I believe, false—the assumption that a philosophically illuminating account of what constitutes knowledge must be in terms of conditions on belief, including the condition that the belief be justified. The answers I gave to questions (1)-(3) are from a different standpoint. From this standpoint we eschew the attempt to give a reductive account of knowledge, whether that be conceptual-analytical or otherwise, in terms of belief plus the satisfaction of further conditions. We replace this with the attempt to understand various kinds of knowledge—perceptual knowledge, knowledge from testimony, and much else besides—in terms of specified abilities implicated in the acquisition or retention of those various kinds of knowledge. How are we to answer question (4) from this perspective?

Just as we are able to tell by looking that there are tomatoes in a basket, so we are also able to tell by looking at tomatoes in a basket that we see that there are. How else is one supposed to tell that one sees that there are tomatoes in the basket if not by looking? The philosophical interest lies in the further characterization of the abilities in question. The former ability is an ability to recognize tomatoes in a basket to be tomatoes in a basket by looking at them and the basket. The latter ability is an ability to recognize concerning tomatoes in a basket that they are *seen by oneself to be tomatoes in that basket*. Again we do this sort of thing by looking at the tomatoes and basket in question. The ability to do this is a second-order ability in that its exercise depends on the exercise of what we may now call the first-order ability to recognize tomatoes to be in a basket. The knowledge I acquire by the exercise of those abilities is recognitional, where that is understood to contrast with what is inferential. The exercise of either ability consists in an application of a concept in immediate response to seeing something. Indeed, each involves the application of a concept to something seen and the very experiences that prompt the one application also prompt the other. It is just that while the first-order ability deploys the two-place relational concept — *tomatoes in . . . basket* in application to, respectively, demonstratively picked out tomatoes and a demonstratively picked out basket ('Those are tomatoes in that basket'), the second-order ability deploys the three-place relational concept — *seen by *** to be tomatoes in . . . basket* in application to, respectively, demonstratively picked out tomatoes, oneself and a demonstratively picked out basket ('Those are seen by me to be tomatoes

in that basket?').¹⁰ I know that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket in virtue of knowing of these tomatoes that they are seen by me to be in that basket.

In the case of the first-order knowledge that there are tomatoes in the basket there is a clear sense in which I tell what I do *from the look of the tomatoes and the basket*. It does not seem right that, in the same way, I tell from the look of the tomatoes in the basket that they are seen by me. The problem does not lie in the idea that we can sometimes tell from the appearance of a thing that it has certain relational properties. We can, for instance, tell from the appearance of black marks on a road that they are skid marks of tyres, and thus caused by a skidding vehicle with tyres. The visual appearance of the marks is made up of properties, which we might think of as strictly visible properties, such that necessarily anything having that visual appearance has those properties.¹¹ The property of being a skid mark is no such visible property: it is possible that there should be marks with the visual appearance that skid marks have without having the property *being skid marks*. Nonetheless, as things are, skid marks have a distinctive visual appearance, in the sense that possession of that appearance is a very highly reliable indicator of being a skid mark. It is because they have a distinctive appearance that someone who has acquired the right technique can recognize the marks to be skid marks from their appearance.¹² But now, what are we to say about the property of being seen by me to be tomatoes? That is certainly not a property that goes to make up the visual appearance of tomatoes and is not in that sense a visible property of any tomatoes. (It is false that anything having the visible appearance of tomatoes has that property.) But nor is there a visual appearance that is a very highly reliable indicator that they are tomatoes seen by me. In other words, there is no visual appearance that is distinctive of being tomatoes seen by me. That looks like a reason for supposing that I do not tell of any tomatoes from their visual appearance that that they are seen by me, or at least not in the same way that I tell from the appearance of certain tomatoes in baskets that they are tomatoes in a basket.

What this brings out is that there is a significant difference between the case of me recognizing tomatoes to be tomatoes and the case of me recognizing tomatoes to be tomatoes seen by me. That should be no great surprise and is, in any case, no objection to regarding the latter knowledge as genuinely recognitional. It is genuinely recognitional because it is the application of a concept in immediate response to a visual perception—seeing the tomatoes. To be sure, possession of the visual appearance in question—the sort of appearance possessed by tomatoes seen by me—is not a highly reliable indicator of presence of tomatoes seen by me since any number of things have the same visible appearance and are not seen by me. Nonetheless something else is a highly reliable indicator of a thing's being a tomato seen

by me and that is my having visual experiences of a certain sort—roughly, the sort produced in me when I look at tomatoes. That is why, assuming I am suitably trained, I can acquire the second-order ability to tell of certain tomatoes that they are seen by me and thus come to know such facts as that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket.

We have then an answer to question (4). The answer shamelessly acknowledges that the availability of the reason constituted by the fact that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket depends on my perceptual knowledge (seeing) that there are tomatoes in the basket. To anyone in the business of giving a reductive account of what makes it the case that I know that there are tomatoes in the basket in terms of a perception-generated reason to believe that there are, the answer would be unhelpful. But that is not the business we are in here. The aim is not to account for the first-order knowledge in terms of basing the belief that there are tomatoes in the basket on the prior consideration that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket. Rather, the picture is that, thanks to the exercise of suitable recognitional abilities, I simultaneously acquire knowledge that there are tomatoes in the basket and knowledge that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket. Thanks to the latter knowledge, the fact that there are tomatoes in the basket can serve as a reason for me to believe that there are tomatoes in the basket. As I remarked previously, we can also make sense of the idea that this reason is my reason for so believing.¹³

We now need an answer to question (5). I suspect that one reason why the approach I am taking is not more widely held is that it is thought that it cannot adequately answer this question.

4.

It will help the discussion along if we first consider a fuller account of perceptual justification that is available within mainstream epistemology. I have in mind the view that experiences, conceived in the non-committal sense, can be justifiers.¹⁴ Though the view is widely held it is not obviously true under the conception of experiences prevailing in the mainstream. Indeed, it has been argued that experiences so conceived cannot be justifiers.¹⁵ It is not as if in our ordinary thinking we routinely cite experiences in the relevant non-committal sense when speaking of reasons for, or justification of, belief in connection with the sort of case that is the focus of the present discussion. On the contrary, the natural way to talk of reasons or justification in connection with visual perception is in terms of what we see to be so. To make the view plausible we need a plausible account of *how* experiences can be justifiers.

At this point one might invoke epistemic principles, for instance, a principle to the effect that having a visual experience such that it looks to one

just as if *p* justifies one in believing that *p*, unless there are countervailing considerations that one should have picked up. (For a somewhat similar principle, see Audi 2003: 28.) Even if there are true principles along those lines they shed little light on why the beliefs should count as being justified when held in conformity to them. There is a more ambitious account in terms of conceptual competence, of which mainstream epistemologists can avail themselves. According to this account a necessary condition of justified belief is that the belief be competently formed, where competent formation has to do with exercising capacities bound up with possession of the concepts that figure in the content of the belief in question and the contents of any other beliefs that are relevant to the justification of that belief. Just as I might exercise a certain inferential competence when I believe one thing on the basis of other things I believe, so—the story goes—I might exercise a kind of quasi-inferential competence when a belief I have is based on my current visual experiences. When I believe that there are tomatoes in the basket, I am justified in doing so only if the formation of the belief is an exercise of such competence in deploying the concept of tomatoes in a basket.¹⁶

The preceding way of thinking can be extended to account for the justification of self-ascriptions of seeings-that. For it can be argued that the very same experiences that justify me in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket might justify me in believing that *I see* that there are tomatoes in the basket. Just as I exercise appropriate conceptual competences in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket in response to current visual experiences, so I may, and in the usual course of events would, exercise a distinct though related set of competences in believing that I see that there are tomatoes in the basket in response to the very same experiences. (These competences, it should be noted, are individuated in a very different way from the recognitional abilities that figure in the view that I have been advancing. In particular, they are individuated internalistically since they have to do with the relation between experiences, conceived as internal psychological states, and beliefs based upon them. By contrast, recognitional abilities are possessed only if there is a suitable fit between the individual who has them and the environment.)

The mainstream approach I have been describing provides a way of expanding on the thought that the interesting story about the justification of the belief that there are tomatoes in the basket, in the scenario described, lies not in the fact that I see that there are but in something—my current visual experiences—that, via their interaction with the requisite competences, justifies me in believing that there are and in believing that I see that there are. The account is in keeping with the desideratum of mainstream epistemology that the explanation of what justifies me in believing that there are tomatoes in the basket should not rely on the fact that I know that there are. Further, it provides an answer to question (5).

Let us consider a good case and a bad case in which an object is seen. The good case is one in which I see, this time, a single tomato and recognize it to be a tomato. The bad case is one in which what I see looks just the same as what I see in the good case except that the thing that looks like a tomato is a skilfully made artefact. (Analogous considerations to those I am setting out here would apply *mutatis mutandis* if the bad case were a hallucinatory experience just like the experience obtained in the good case.) Under the operative conception there is no difference in the experiences I have in those cases, or none that affects their justificatory force. Nothing is discernible in either situation that gives me a reason to doubt or even hesitate over whether the way the situation visually appears to be is the way that it is. (Let's suppose that the environment is one in which it would be highly unusual for there to be a dead ringer for a tomato.) It strikes many as intuitive that these circumstances are on a par with respect to the justification of the belief that the thing is a tomato.¹⁷ The conception of conceptual competence I sketched above can be pressed into service here to provide an explanatory gloss and thus an answer to question (5). The idea would be that I exercise the same conceptual competences in forming the belief that the thing is a tomato in each of these circumstances; hence their parity with the respect to the justification of the belief. These competences have to do with being geared to form beliefs of this sort in response to current visual experiences provided that the experiences are in an appropriate range, and there is nothing one could reasonably be expected to discern that suggests that one's experiences should not be taken at face value.

5.

Question (5) is approached in a very different way from the contrasting perspective that I am commending. The starting point is that in the bad case I lack a reason to believe the thing to be a tomato that I have in the good case. In the good case I see that the thing is a tomato. Since the belief is sustained by that reason, it is as well grounded as a belief can be. But it is not being prompted by this reason that explains why the belief was formed. The belief was formed because the requisite recognitional ability was exercised, this exercise consisted in the acquisition of the first-order knowledge, and the first-order knowledge is one way in which one can believe that the thing is a tomato.¹⁸ In the bad case I merely seem to see that the thing is a tomato. Further, we have an explanation of how it is that this reason is available to me in the good case. It is available because, thanks to the exercise of a second-order recognitional ability, I know in that case that I see the thing to be a tomato. While it might seem to me that I recognize a tomato to be a tomato in the bad case, I do not. If the thing is not a tomato, then I have not told that it is and thus have not exercised an ability to tell that it is. Similarly,

in the bad case it might seem to me that I know that I see that the thing is a tomato, but I have not and therefore have not exercised an ability to tell such a thing.

In both the good and bad cases I judge from the visual appearance of the thing that it is a tomato. This might suggest that what I have to go on in both cases is the same, from which one might conclude that the cases could not possibly differ with respect to the justification of my belief. But the problem arises only if one does not fully take on board the fact that understanding the asymmetry with respect to justification between the cases depends on understanding how it can be that *knowledge* is acquired in the good case and not in the bad. To appreciate this fully we need to delve a little further into the nature of the recognitional ability in play.

Having a visual-perceptual recognitional ability requires one to be very highly reliable in a specific way—in particular, with respect to correct applications of a concept in response seeing something. As previously noted one can be thus reliable with respect to judging correctly of things from the way they look that they are tomatoes, only if the visual appearance that is characteristic of tomatoes is also *distinctive* of them, and so only if this appearance is such that its possession by a thing is a very highly reliable indicator that it is a tomato. If the world were such that too many things that look like tomatoes are not tomatoes, and these non-tomato look-alikes were distributed throughout the things that look like tomatoes, then this condition would be not met. In such a world, barring some rearrangement to select out the tomatoes, it would not be possible to tell of things that they are tomatoes from the way they look.

Distinctiveness can be environment-relative. That is the chief lesson of fake barn scenarios (Goldman 1976). If I am in an environment in which barns have a distinctive visual appearance, then I can learn to tell of structures in that environment that they are barns from the way they look. My having the ability to do this is compatible with there being places in which barns do not have a distinctive appearance—where too many things that look like barns are not. In such a place I would not be able to tell concerning structures in that place that they are barns from the way they look. The good case we have been dealing with must be one in which the environment is such that tomatoes have a distinctive appearance, for otherwise I would not have, and so could not exercise, the requisite recognitional ability.

The notion of distinctiveness can tolerate some exceptions. Lemons have a distinctive appearance even if there are pieces of wax or soaps that look just like lemons. Indeed, the exceptions need not be all that rare. When they are not, those with the ability to recognize lemons as lemons must be alert to situations in which things looking like lemons might not be lemons and alert to places in which it would be odd to find a real lemon, like bathrooms in a spot where you might expect to find soap. It is possible that those well attuned to such things should make occasional mistakes. If they do they

would be unlucky.¹⁹ That would not mean that they are lucky when they judge correctly, for as things are it is to be expected that they judge correctly if they judge at all.

Analogous considerations apply to the ability to tell *that one sees* a thing to be a tomato. Having that ability requires that the environment with respect to which it is exercised is favourable in two ways: (a) the visual appearance of tomatoes is distinctive of tomatoes, and (b) it looking to one as if there is a tomato before one is a very highly reliable indicator that one is seeing a tomato to be a tomato.

What all this is leading to is that the justification I have in the good case for believing that the thing is a tomato should not be thought to derive simply from the visual appearance of the tomato, far less from my experiences conceived in the non-committal way. Rather, it depends on me coming to know that the thing is a tomato from the way it looks and on me coming to know that I see that the thing is a tomato, in the manner I explained in the previous section. So it depends on the abilities that make this possible. So it depends on the environment being favourable to having those abilities with respect to it.²⁰

For all I have said so far the envisaged bad case might be bad from bad luck or it might be radically bad. The first possibility is one in which the environment—not just my immediate surroundings but the wider environment in which I live and move—is favourable to telling of things that they are tomatoes from the way they look, but in which I have been stymied by an exception that I could not be expected to have noticed. If this is so then, though I count as having the requisite recognitional ability, I have not exercised it. The second possibility is an environment in which tomatoes do not have a distinctive visual appearance—look-alikes that are not tomatoes abound. In that case I do not have the recognitional ability with respect to that environment. For both of these bad cases we have an explanation of the absence of the justification that is available in the good case. For the justification in the good case depends on my acquiring knowledge that the thing is a tomato. No such knowledge is acquired in the bad case.

We have then a coherent explanatory structure. For the good case we have an explanation of the first-order knowledge, as well as the second-order knowledge that accounts for my having the reason that justifies me in believing that the thing is a tomato. In the bad case there is neither first-order nor second-order knowledge, and I lack the reason I have in the good case to believe that the thing is a tomato. My coming to believe, in the bad case, that the thing is a tomato is not the exercise of the recognitional ability that is exercised in the good case. This is not yet to answer question (5) for it does not suffice to explain away the intuition that some have had that the good and bad cases are on a par with respect to justification. I turn to this matter in the next section.

6.

I have identified a clear asymmetry with respect to justification but the intuition under consideration might well remain (see footnote 17), and understandably so. I do not think that it can simply be dismissed as being theory-driven, though what has been made of it depends on a great deal of theoretical baggage. There is a sense in which the good and bad cases are on a par with respect to something that might be called justification. It is entirely understandable that in the bad case I am led to believe falsely that the thing is a tomato. For in the circumstances it is to me just as if the thing is a tomato and just as if I am seeing that it is. We may take it to be built into the scenario that this is not due to any carelessness on my part or failure to attend to facts that I could reasonably be expected to have noticed. So my belief in the bad case is reasonable, in that, roughly speaking, it is a belief that a suitably equipped and competent person might well form in the envisaged situation without doxastic irresponsibility. This, or some refined version, is the truth behind the intuition. We may, if we like, call being reasonable in this sense *being justified*. The heavy duty theorizing comes with the idea that this is *the* epistemologically central notion of being justified. Though reflection on Gettier cases has encouraged acceptance of that idea, further reflection on such cases helps us to see that reasonableness is but a shadow of what we are really after when we wish our beliefs to be well founded and in that sense justified. Reverting to one of Edmund Gettier's (1963) original examples, if I believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket because I believe falsely that Jones is the man who will get the job and has ten coins in his pocket then, however reasonable it might be, the former belief is not well founded because I am wrong thinking that Jones will get the job. What I take to be a reason for believing that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket—that Jones will get the job and has ten coins in his pocket, which I took for a fact—is really no reason to believe this, and so my belief is not justified in the sense of well founded. To be justified in that sense there would need to have been a reason to believe and I would need to have believed for that reason, but there is no such reason.²¹ Despite this my belief might be reasonable, but this notion of being reasonable is parasitic on the notion of being justified in the sense of being well founded.

Some puzzles might still remain. One might think that any defeater that would undercut the justification in the bad case would undercut to the same extent the justification in the good case, and that as a consequence the justification in the good case cannot be stronger than in the bad case.²² Suppose, for instance, that in each case I had been credibly told that the thing I was looking at was a skilfully made artefact. (Treat the bad case as one of the rare-exception type rather than as a radically bad in the sense previously explained.) One might think that this would undercut the justification my experience affords me in the good case as much as it would

in the bad case. More generally, it might seem that anything that would undercut the justification in the bad case, by providing reason to doubt that the appearance in question should be taken at face value, would just as much undercut the justification in the good case. If that were so would it not show that the justification for my belief in the good case cannot be stronger than the justification for my belief in the bad case?

The way the problem is set up overlooks the distinction between reasonableness and well-foundedness. I have already conceded that the belief in the bad case might be reasonable. Let me now concede that it might be as reasonable as the belief in the good case. There remains an asymmetry between the cases since the belief in the good case is well-founded because grounded in knowledge that I see the thing to be a tomato, and the belief in the bad case is not well-founded. Still, it is worth pursuing the ramifications of the possibility of countervailing testimony.

Even if it is conceded that I would lack justification for believing that the thing is a tomato in the good case, if in that case I were credibly told that the thing is a skilfully made artefact, it does not follow that in the absence of such testimony I do not see the thing to be a tomato or have the reason to believe that it is which is constituted by the fact that I see the tomato to be a tomato. Indeed, there is no reason to suppose that the conditions for knowledge that the thing is a tomato, and for knowledge that one sees the thing to be a tomato, could not be met. And if I am justified in believing the thing to be a tomato in virtue of having the reason to believe this that is constituted by the fact that I see that it is, the justification is manifestly stronger than any I have in the bad case since at best my justification in the bad case is mere reasonableness—roughly, the appearance of well-foundedness.

Despite the foregoing it might seem that if one became apprised of the testimony one would cease to be justified in believing that the thing is a tomato in either the good or bad case. Then it might strike one as odd that one retains justification in the good case just because misleading testimony is absent. To address this we need to consider what to say about the good case if I were credibly told that the thing is a skilfully made artefact. If the setting were, say, my kitchen then it would take an awful lot for the testimony to be credible. For the sake of argument let's suppose that the scenario is such that the testimony is credible. There are different ways in which this could bear upon me.

If I believe the testimony then, barring dire confusion, I would cease to believe the thing to be a tomato. Indeed, even if I were not sure what to think about the testimony I would withhold judgement. Here I cease to know or be justified in believing that the thing is a tomato simply because I stop believing that it is. That shows that actual countervailing testimony case can have an impact on the justification in the good case but puts no strain on the claim that in the good case in which there is no misleading

testimony I both know and am justified in my belief since, as we have seen, the conditions for knowledge and justification can be met.

Suppose I were in such confusion that, while thinking the testimony is true or might well be true, I nonetheless held on to my belief that the thing is a tomato. Then, it seems to me, the conditions for having exercised the requisite recognitional ability would not be met. I acknowledged in the previous section that possession of a perceptual-recognitional ability requires one to be sensitive to considerations suggesting that the appearance of things is be misleading. The claim on which I am relying now is that if I do not manifest that sensitivity on some occasion then I am not exercising the recognitional ability even if I possess it. So if due to confusion I am indifferent to a report I take to be credible, to the effect that the appearance of the tomato is deceptive, then I am not manifesting the required sensitivity, and so not exercising the relevant recognitional ability. In that case, whatever might have been the case prior to the report, I do not now know either that the thing is a tomato, or that I see it to be a tomato. But that has no implication for whether in a good case in which I am not confused I know these things and have the justification they make available.

7.

The position I have been commending in this discussion may be viewed as a way of developing the portion of what John McDowell says in the following passage that concerns perception.

Someone who remembers that things are a certain way, like someone who sees that things are a certain way, has an excellent reason for taking it that things are that way; the excellence comes out in the fact that from the premise that one remembers that things are thus and so, as from the premise that one sees that things are thus and so, it follows that things *are* thus and so. (McDowell 1994: 427–28.)

Like McDowell, I take this to be commonsense and to be none the worse for that. McDowell immediately adds that the epistemic positions to which he refers—states of seeing-that and remembering-that—‘put their occupants in possession of reasons for their beliefs’. This may be commonsense as well but it cries out for an explanation of how seeing that *p* and remembering that *p* yield a reason to believe that *p* and for an understanding of why mainstream epistemologists have not found it natural to make factive states central in their accounts of the justified belief that is associated with perceptual knowledge and memory knowledge. I have attempted to provide such an explanation for the case of visual-perceptual knowledge, with due regard to at least some of the mainstream epistemologist’s difficulties.²³

Notes

1. I am taking it here that I can have a reason to believe that *p* yet not believe that *p*. If the fact that I see that *p* is a reason for which I believe that *p* then I believe that *p* for that reason.
2. The idea that recognition is knowledge acquisition is explicit in Dretske 1990: section 1.
3. Seeing-that is taken to entail knowing-that in Warnock 1954/55: section II, Sellars 1963: 67, Dretske 1969: especially 78–139, 1979, 1990, 1992, Armstrong 1973: 27, Williamson 2000: section 1.4 and Stroud 2004: 167. Christopher Peacocke (2005: 229) endorses the more general claim that '[p]erceiving that *p* is a form of knowing that *p*'. John Searle (1983: 42) has said that the claim that *X* sees that *p* but did not know that *p* is 'odd, and perhaps even self-contradictory' but the analysis he gives of seeing-that (1983: 61–62) makes no reference either to believing or knowing.
4. I explore contrasts with virtue-theoretic ways of individuating cognitive abilities in Millar 2009.
5. A fuller account may be found in my contribution to Pritchard, Millar, and Haddock 2010.
6. McDowell's discussion is directed at Barry Stroud (2002: 84) who takes it for granted that seeing-that entails believing-that or judging-that. McDowell (2003) uses a similar example to the same effect. David Armstrong (1968: 227) takes it to be plausible, and Frank Jackson (1977: 160) to be uncontroversial, that seeing-that entails believing-that. Armstrong 1973: 27 more strongly endorses the view. It is an implication of Dretske's position referred in footnote 2 and accepted by Robert Audi (2003:19). Brian O' Shaughnessy (2000: 318–21) presents arguments aimed at showing that seeing-that just is believing-that as a result of contemporaneous object-seeing.
7. This is in keeping with the form of disjunctivism expounded in McDowell (1982: 386–87).
8. The view here seems to be in tension with McDowell's remark elsewhere (1994: 430*n*) that 'one does not count as seeing something to be the case (even if the fact that that is how things look to one results, in the way that is characteristic of seeing, from the fact that that is how things are), if one's taking it that that is how things are is doxastically irresponsible'. If the taking is not constitutive of the seeing-that why should the irresponsibility of the taking be thought relevant to the seeing?
9. This disagreement is very minor in comparison with much in McDowell's thinking with which I am in agreement. For a sympathetic analysis and discussion of his wider picture, see Millar 2008.
10. Peacocke (2005: 222) draws attention to a passage in Aristotle's *De Anima* (425^b 12–17) in which Aristotle takes it to be evident that 'it is through sense that we are aware that we are seeing or hearing' and concludes that it is by sight that we are aware of seeing. (The translation is that of Ross 1931.) Peacocke thinks the best way to understand this is in terms of the idea that when you see that *p* you are entitled to make a transition to the self-ascriptive judgement that you see that *p*. On my view one would normally have exercised

the relevant recognitional ability in forming a belief, not necessarily forming a judgement, as to what one sees to be so. In such cases there need be no transition since the belief arises immediately from what one sees, to all intents and purposes simultaneously with the belief or judgement as to what is before one.

11. See further Millar 2000: 79–81.
12. It should not be concluded that knowing the marks to be skid marks must be inferential rather than recognitional. There need be no premise specifying visible features from which one concludes that they are skid marks.
13. If the foregoing is correct those who take it that only believed propositions can be justifiers are not faced with the choice that Anthony Brueckner (2008: 109–10) takes them to be faced with—the choice between an implausible foundationalism according to which foundational perceptual beliefs are justified but lack justifiers and some form of coherentism.
14. For views of this type see, for instance, Pollock 1987, Millar 1991, Pryor 2000, Heumer 2001, Audi 2003, and Brueckner 2008.
15. See Davidson (1983: 142–44).
16. I offered just such an account in Millar (1991) in attempt to meet Davidson's challenge while in the grip of the epistemological tradition I am now resisting. I draw on this account here. A virtue-theoretic epistemology in the style of Ernest Sosa's 2007 and 2009 could be viewed as an account of this type if the cognitive competences figuring in the epistemology of perceptual knowledge were taken to be conceptual competences.
17. Earl Conee (2007: 32) makes essentially the same point and in relation to examples in which the bad case is an hallucination he says: '... taking for granted that veridical perception relates the perceiver "directly" to an object in some way, still, this directness does not make for a greater reasonableness of perceptual beliefs'. He adds, 'It remains strongly intuitive that perception does not provide any better reason for an external world belief than would be provided by a matching hallucination' (Conee 2007: 18).
18. In the background here is that instead of thinking of the belief as an ingredient of the knowledge along with others, we think of knowing that the thing is a tomato as a mode of believing that it is.
19. The more exceptions there are the more talk of telling (just) from the appearance, as opposed to the appearances and the surrounding circumstances, is only a rough approximation to the truth.
20. For more relevant discussion see my contribution to Pritchard, Millar, and Haddock 2010.
21. Surely in some sense I had a reason. We can accommodate this thought in terms of the distinction between normative and motivating or explanatory reasons. My reason to believe was, as I thought, that Jones would get the job and has ten coins in his pocket. What makes this my motivating reason is that I treated it as, in effect, a normative reason—a reason to believe—and believed accordingly. But it is no such reason.
22. I am here considering a line of thought analogous to one advanced by Earl Conee (2007: 19) in which the bad case is a hallucination.
23. I am grateful to my colleague Adrian Haddock for detailed written comments

on earlier versions of this article, and much discussion, which led to what I hope are substantive improvements.

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