

7

Realism and Explanation

According to (OV), perceptual experience is most fundamentally a matter of a person standing in a relation of conscious acquaintance, from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality and in certain specific circumstances of perception, with various mind-independent physical objects in the world around him that therefore constitute the direct objects of his experience in the early modern sense that I have been working with throughout. Thus, the truth of empirical realism consists in the conjunction of (I) and (II) along with a simple rejection of (III) from the Inconsistent Triad that I began with in ch. 1.

- (I) Physical objects are mind-independent.
- (II) Physical objects are the direct objects of perception.
- (III) The direct objects of perception are mind-dependent.

In short, the direct objects of perception are mind-independent physical objects.

The question to be addressed here in my final chapter is this. In what way, if at all, does the mind-independence of the direct objects of perception show up from the subject's point of view? It is one thing for us as philosophical theorists to advance an account of the fundamental nature of our perceptual relation with the physical world

Realism and Explanation

in such a way as to vindicate our most basic pre-theoretic commitments about perception and its objects, to give arguments for this account and to defend it from various objections. The proposed account is that perceptual experience is acquaintance with mind-independent physical objects. It is quite another thing to explain the extent to which the correctness of that very account is evident in our own experience as perceivers of the physical world around us.¹ My particular question here is how the mind-independence of the proposed direct objects of perception comes to light from the perceiver's point of view; and the focus will be upon how best to solve a problem that arises for a familiar and attractive approach to answering to this question.

It is important to begin with to clarify the question a little further and to distinguish it from other related questions. My question is not how perceivers know that the objects that are presented to them in perception are mind-independent, although the answer to my own question provides a start on answering this one. That is to say, I am not concerned right away with the epistemological project of explicating the status as knowledge of any reflective belief that perceivers may have that the physical objects that they perceive are mind-independent. Nor is my question best put directly in terms of perceivers' explicit beliefs that physical objects are mind-independent or the process by which they acquire them. Such beliefs, which do in my view often amount

¹ The philosophical account must of course be consistent with the facts about how things seem from the subject's point of view; but it is a substantive philosophical question in its own right what further constraint, if any, the subject's perspective places on the correct philosophical account of perception, and how exactly this should be taken into account in the development and defence of the philosophical theory. I hope to make some kind of progress with these issues in explaining in particular how I think that the truth of (OV) shows up in our own perception of the physical world (see esp. § 7.3); but any engagement with the issues in general is beyond the scope of the present work. For helpful recent discussions see Martin (forthcoming, esp. ch. 1) and Spener (in preparation (a)).

Realism and Explanation

to knowledge, are based upon the perceptual presentation itself of mind-independent such things that I claim provides perceivers with a provisional conception at least of what physical objects are. Having perceptual experience as I conceive of it is a matter of the subject's conscious acquaintance with mind-independent physical objects themselves. This already constitutes a determinate implicit commitment to a realm of such things. My question here is how this determinate experiential commitment, which grounds any explicit belief or knowledge that perceivers may attain on its basis, is itself manifest in perceivers' own engagement with their perceptual experience and the world around them that is presented in it. Perception itself consists in a relation of conscious acquaintance, from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality and in certain specific circumstances of perception, with various mind-independent physical objects in the world around us. My question here is how the mind-independence of those direct objects of perception manifests itself in this way to us as perceivers, so as to constitute such a determinate experiential commitment on our part.

I insisted in ch. 3 above that it is a necessary condition upon any satisfactory account of the presentation of physical objects to us in perception that this provides us with an initial conception at least of what such physical objects are. I call this basic idea that physical objects are the very things that are presented to us in perception in such a way as to provide us with a rough and provisional conception at least of what such physical objects are, empiricism. The (OV) contention that mind-independent physical objects are the direct objects of perception is ideally suited to comply with empiricism in the most straightforward way. For, as I explained in ch. 5, it is precisely the nature of those very physical objects themselves that provides, along with the

Realism and Explanation

subjects spatiotemporal point of view, the sense modality in question and the other relevant circumstances of perception, the most fundamental account of how things look to the subject in perception on this view.

The specific question that I focus on here, though, is how the mind-independence of such physical direct objects is supposed to come to light from our own perspective as perceivers of the physical world around us according to (OV). How is empiricism compatible with realism concerning the physical objects that we perceive?² That is, how is the idea that our provisional conception of what physical objects are is provided by their presentation to us in perceptual experience compatible with the fact that what physical objects are is mind-independent things? A natural and familiar answer appeals to the centrality to our thought about the physical world and our experience of it of our explanations of the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience of physical objects by appeal to the prior and independent nature of those very physical objects themselves that we perceive. Thinking of physical objects as the entities whose nature explains our own experience in this way, I claim, plays a crucial role in grounding our conception of them as genuinely mind-independent. On its most familiar interpretation and development, though, this answer, that we explain the order and nature of our perceptual experience of physical objects by appeal the nature of the physical objects themselves, raises a serious problem. For it threatens the basic empiricist idea that we are genuinely presented with those mind-independent physical objects themselves in perceptual experience, that it is through our experience of them that we acquire a rough and

² Throughout this chapter I use ‘realism’ to denote physical realism: the thesis that physical objects are mind-independent in nature.

Realism and Explanation

provisional conception at least of what the mind-independent physical objects in question actually are.

I argue that this threat may be avoided by resisting the orthodox development of the explanatory proposal. The idea that we explain the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience of physical objects by appeal to the prior and independent nature of the physical objects themselves that we perceive succeeds in securing realism in our conception of the physical world around us without threatening empiricism provided that we respect the autonomous standing of our everyday commonsense explanations of experience. These are in no need of any fundamental scientific revision in such a way as to undermine empiricism.

The chapter has three parts. First (§ 7.1), I elaborate the explanatory proposal, explain in detail its role in securing our grasp as perceivers of the mind-independence of the physical objects that we perceive, and outline the threat that the orthodox development of this proposal poses to the presentation of those very objects to us in experience. Second (§ 7.2), I suggest how this threat should be avoided. I argue that there is a perfectly adequate implementation of the explanatory proposal that secures the realist status of physical objects as mind-independent from our perspective as perceivers without in any way threatening the empiricist idea that these are the very things that are presented to us in perception. Third (§ 7.3), I end with my conclusions.

7.1 Explanation, Realism and Scientific-Physics

Realism and Explanation

We ordinarily cite the properties of physical objects in explanation of the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience of those very things. In vision, for example, we regularly give explanations along the following lines.

(E1) The coin looks circular to Janet because it is circular and she is viewing it from head on.

(E2) The coin looks elliptical to John because it is circular and he is viewing it from an angle.

(E3) The coin would look elliptical to Janet if she were to change her point of view because it is circular and she would then be viewing it from an angle.

(E4) The jumper looks red outdoors because it is red and lighting conditions are normal outdoors.

(E5) It looks mauve in the store because it is red and the lighting conditions are artificially dingy the store.

(E6) It would look red if the lights in the store were improved because it is red and it would then look its actual colour.

I contend that our offering and accepting such explanations constitutes a commitment to realism about the physical objects that they cite. For, first, as we have seen, realism consists in a certain priority of the natures of physical objects themselves over the

Realism and Explanation

perceptual appearances to which they may give rise; and, second, the explanatory standing of such explanations depends upon our appreciation of this very priority. I elaborate each of these two points in turn.

First, recall the standard account of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities that I gave in ch. 3 above.³

According to the standard account, the most basic distinctions concerning secondary qualities are between, say, red-type and green-type appearances, and the rest, conceived quite independently of the question of what their worldly correlates, if any, may be. The characterization of such appearances is prior to, and independent of, any characterization of the worldly properties that may in some way be presented or indicated by them. Having given such a characterization, of red-type appearances, say, we may then define a property – redness – which applies to mind-independent objects, as that of being disposed to produce those kinds of appearances – red-type ones – or, alternatively, as the property of having whatever underlying physical constitution happens in the actual world to ground that disposition.

In contrast, according to the standard account, the most basic distinctions concerning the primary qualities are those between, say, squareness and circularity, and the rest, as properties of mind-independent things themselves, conceived quite independently of the question of what appearances, if any, they might produce. Having first

³ Recall also that I do not myself endorse the standard account. See Campbell (1993) for an alternative that I prefer. This will become relevant later with my inclusion of the colour explanations (E4)-(E5) alongside shape explanations (E1)-(E3) throughout. I appeal to the standard account rather as a relatively well-known framework in which to bring out the issues that are my focus here.

Realism and Explanation

identified which property squareness is, we can then identify square-type appearances as those that present something as having that property – squareness. So, the relevant appearances are to be characterized only by appeal to a prior, and independent, characterization of the worldly properties that they may present.

Generalizing this basic idea, I claim that the mind-independence of the objects that we perceive consists in the individuating priority of their nature over the various appearances that show up in our perception of them. As I explain and illustrate in what follows, the resultant individuation of appearances by appeal to the prior nature of their objects proceeds in specific instances on the basis of particular determinate modifications of the general nature of the mind-independent physical objects that we perceive. Skipping ahead to the version of the position that I myself favour, the picture is something like this. Mind-independent physical objects are persisting, unified, extended space occupants. A specific modification of this general nature would be that of being circularly extended, for example; and the corresponding visual appearance is to be individuated precisely as the look of a circular physical object presented from head on in normal lighting conditions, say. In any case, the key point at this stage is that realism shows up from our perspective as perceivers if and only if we have from that perspective some means of appreciating the fact that the nature of the physical objects themselves that we perceive is in this way individually basic in relation to the various appearances that such objects may present to us in perception.

It is natural to object to this whole approach right away that priority of individuating characterization is one thing, metaphysical status quite another. The first is a matter of how we identify the phenomena in question; the second is a matter of the nature of

Realism and Explanation

those phenomena themselves. Indeed, the standard account of secondary qualities outlined above surely serves to make just this point. Suppose that we do first of all characterize the red-type appearances, as specific conscious experiential phenomena, conceived quite independently of the question of what their worldly correlates, if any, may be; and suppose that we do then go on derivatively to characterize the redness of physical objects as their possession of whatever underlying physical constitution happens in the actual world to ground the disposition to produce such red-type appearances in normal subjects under normal circumstances. Then an object's possession of that underlying physical property, whichever it may be, is a perfectly mind-independent matter. It is entirely independent of the way in which it does or might appear to anyone. Thus, although the redness of physical objects is characterized only on the basis of a prior characterization of the experiential appearances to which it gives rise, the property itself is perfectly mind-independent.

In reply I admit entirely that there is a mind-independent property here: whichever underlying physical property it is that turns out actually to ground objects' disposition to produce red-type appearances in normal subject under normal circumstances. The crucial point, though, is that, by the explicit lights of the account under consideration, this is absolutely not the property that such objects are subjectively presented as having in our perceptual experience of their colour. It is not, as it is sometimes said, redness-as-it-appears-to-us. For we have no idea whatsoever which property this underlying physical property is on the basis of our perception of it on the standard account of secondary qualities in question. The property presented is rather that of appearances' being a red-type, which is in itself quite neutral on what the worldly correlate, if any, of such appearances may be. Thus, the property, if any, that physical

Realism and Explanation

objects are presented as having in our colour experience, on this view, is not mind-independent at all, but rather a mind-dependent one.⁴ Suppose that colour appearances were conceived quite differently. Suppose, that is to say, that they were correctly characterized as presentations of specific properties of things not themselves individuated by any reference to their appearances, as appearances of squareness are characterized according to the standard account of primary qualities above as presentations of a specific geometric shape. This is in my view the correct account of colour appearances, although it is of course quite contrary to the standard account currently under consideration here by way of illustration of the notion of mind-dependence in play. In that case the colour properties presented in perception would indeed be mind-independent. (Contrast with the above the fact that the squareness of physical objects themselves is squareness-as it-appears-to-us according to the standard account.) This is precisely what is not the case on the standard account of the secondary qualities.

I conclude therefore that this standard account of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities in fact serves strongly to confirm my criterion of mind-independence. The point here is absolutely not that the standard account is a correct account of the distinction between the shapes and colours of physical objects that entails my criterion of mind-independence. It is rather that the standard account would, if it were correct, characterize a respect in which the shapes of things that we are presented with are mind-independent in which the colours that we are presented with are not. It marks a genuine distinction between mind-independence and mind-

⁴ I take this to be the substance of Descartes' (1986) contention – and indeed his argument for it – that the ascription of secondary qualities as we perceive them to mind-independent physical objects is not just contingently false but entirely confused and incoherent, presupposing as it does that such objects effectively have sensations.

Realism and Explanation

dependence. I do not myself agree that perceived colours are mind-dependent in this sense, although I give no argument for that view here. That is why I reject the standard account as an account of distinction between the familiar primary and secondary qualities themselves. Still, I do adopt the genuine distinction that that account marks in characterizing what it is for the direct objects of our perception to be mind-independent. Thus, the mind-independence of the objects that are presented in perception consists in the individuating priority of their nature over the various appearances that show up in our perception of them.⁵

Second, the explanatory standing of our explanations of the order and nature of perceptual experience on the basis of the nature of the physical objects themselves that we perceive depends upon our appreciation of precisely this individuating priority of objects over appearances. For suppose that we conceived the individuating priority in reverse, as in the standard account of secondary qualities given above. In that case, purportedly explanatory ascriptions of properties of physical objects are in reality ascriptions of properties essentially characterized in terms of the disposition to produce such and such appearances in normal subjects under normal circumstances. Thus the resultant explanations of those very appearances are either unsatisfying or evidently mere placeholders for genuine explanations in quite different terms that re-establish the individuating priority with properties of objects independent and prior to any question of their appearances. Simply being told that something appears a certain way because it is disposed to do so gives us no substantive understanding why it appears as it does without some indication of what grounds the relevant disposition.

⁵ The key claims involved in this illustration from the standard account of the primary/secondary quality distinction, and especially the crucial role of empiricism as defined above, return at the heart of the main argument of § 7.2 below.

Realism and Explanation

Articulating this ground, along with the general law that things that are so constituted normally appear thus and so, does provide an explanation; but only by citing a grounding constitution that is characterized prior to and independently of any question as to what appearances, if any, things so constituted may produce. Thus the genuine explanatory standing of explanations of perceptual appearances depends upon our appreciation of the individuative priority of the explanatory properties of physical objects over the appearances to be explained.

It is sometimes said that the relation between certain perceptible properties of physical objects and the appearances that these present in perception is one of no straightforward priority either way (McDowell, 1985b). I find it difficult to articulate the proposal fully; but the essential outline is as follows. On the basis of certain experiences that we have, we are able directly to sort various objects into groups, without, as it were, paying any heed to the nature of the experiences that provide our cues to do so. We may call the relevant groups of objects 'red', 'green' and so on. Reflecting on this capacity for object categorization, we may go on to sort our experiential cues into groups also, characterizing these in turn as appearances of red, appearances of green, and so on. Thus there is an epistemological priority, on the subject's part at least, from the colour properties of objects to their colour appearances. Still, there is nothing 'in reality' that unifies all the red objects other than their disposition normally to produce appearances of red in us. These appearances are unified metaphysically as single kind in virtue of their intrinsic subjective type, entirely independently of the question of what their worldly correlates, if any, may be; and this in turn, and derivatively, imposes a metaphysical unity on the red physical objects, as those disposed to produce such appearances in

Realism and Explanation

normal subjects under normal circumstances. Thus there is a metaphysical priority from colour appearances to the colour properties of objects. There is no straightforward single priority either way.

If this really were a view on which there is no individuating priority of the relevant kind either way between the perceptible properties of physical objects and the various appearances that show up in our perception of them, then my argument above would fail. For I conclude that the explanatory standing of our explanations of perceptual appearances by their objects depends upon our appreciation of the individuating priority from objects to appearances from the fact that they are incompatible with the assumption of an individuating priority from appearances to objects. I ignore the possibility of any genuinely no-priority view. Fortunately for my argument, the position outlined above is categorically not a no-priority view of this threatening kind. For the primary unification is at the level of appearances, in the characterization of which subjective condition is that of something 'looking red', say, only on the basis of which is it then possible to characterize the corresponding property of physical objects themselves: being red. So, regardless of the epistemological claims, about our capacity for sorting coloured objects in advance of sorting their colour appearances, there is a clear individuating priority of the relevant kind from appearances to objects. The point is confirmed by the fact that any genuinely mind-independent unity that there may be to the objects sorted as red, say, on this view, is not the unity that those things are subjectively presented as having. For we have no idea whatsoever what this may be on the basis of our perception of them. So this position is definitively an instance of the order of individuating priority characteristic of the standard account of secondary qualities given above.

Indeed it is difficult to see how there possibly could be a genuinely no-priority view of the kind required to block my argument. For what it is to be an appearances of \underline{F} -ness must in general have something to do with what it is to be \underline{F} . I offer two possibilities: being \underline{F} is characterized in terms of appearing \underline{F} (as in the case of the standard account of secondary qualities); or appearing \underline{F} is characterized in terms of being \underline{F} (as in the case of the standard account of primary qualities). A no-priority view must presumably either endorse neither of these claims or endorse both of them. If it endorses neither, then the worry is that appearing \underline{F} and being \underline{F} fail to be related to each other in any way that is adequate to sustain the prima facie impression that ' \underline{F} ' is being used without equivocation between them. If it endorses both, then the danger is that the resultant circularity will obstruct any attempt to distinguish the two pairs being \underline{F} and appearing \underline{F} , on the one hand, and being \underline{G} and appearing \underline{G} , on the other, for any \underline{F} and \underline{G} of the same general type – e.g. colours. For example, suppose that what it is to be red is defined in terms of what it is to appear red – $R = \Delta(A-R)$, for some function Δ taking experiences to the disposition to produce them, say – and what it is to appear red is defined in terms of what it is to be red – $A-R = \Pi(R)$, for some function Π taking properties of objects to the perceptual appearance of them, say. Suppose also that the same goes for the relations between what it is to be blue and what it is to appear blue: $B = \Delta(A-B)$ and $A-B = \Pi(B)$. Suppose finally that these are both genuinely no-priority views. That is to say, there is no more fundamental characterization of what it is to appear red, vs. appear blue, in terms of which the property of being red, vs. being blue, may be defined by the equations $R = \Delta(A-R)$; and there is no more fundamental characterization of what it is to be red, vs. be blue, in terms of which the corresponding appearance of red, vs. appearance of blue, may

Realism and Explanation

be defined by the equation $A-R = \prod(R)$. It follows that there is no obvious basis on which to distinguish between the two supposedly quite distinct pairs R and A-R, on the one hand, and B and A-B, on the other. These are merely notational variants. So far as I can see, then, breaking the symmetry requires an assignment of definitional priority. Either the appearance of red is identified, and distinguished from the appearance of blue, as that specific kind of appearance, in which case the property of being red may be defined in its terms. Or the property of being red is identified, and distinguished from the property of being blue, as that specific property of physical objects, in which case the appearance of red may be defined in its terms. Thus, in the absence of any clearly articulated candidate for a defensible genuinely no-priority view, I contend that my argument goes through.

To reiterate my second key point about explanations of perceptual appearances by appeal to the physical objects that we perceive then, their explanatory standing depends upon our appreciation of the individuating priority of the natures of the physical objects themselves over the perceptual appearances to be explained.

Putting this together with the constitutive account of mind-independence in terms of precisely such individuating priority, it follows that the explanatory standing of our explanations of the order and nature of our perceptual experience of physical objects on the basis of the nature of the physical objects themselves that we perceive delivers a clear positive verdict on the status of physical objects as mind-independent from our own perspective as perceivers. Offering and accepting such explanations constitutes a commitment from our perspective to realism about the physical objects that we perceive: it constitutes our recognition of the mind-independence of the direct objects

Realism and Explanation

of perception. Call this the Explanatory Proposal (EP) as to how realism comes to light from our perceptual perspective upon the physical world. The key claim is that the mind-independence of the physical objects that we perceive shows up from our own perspective as perceivers in our appeal to such objects as the explanatory grounds of our various perceptual experiences of those very things from different points of view and in different circumstances of perception.

To be absolutely clear, (EP) is the proposal that the mind-independence of the objects that we perceive is evident from our perspective as perceivers in virtue of our explanation of the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience on the basis of the prior and independent nature of those objects themselves, that is to say, in virtue of our recognition of the physical objects that we perceive as the explanatory grounds of our perceptual experience of them. In this way we appreciate the status of the physical objects that we perceive as providing the mind-independent unifying explanations of the various actual and possible experiences that we may have of those very things from different points of view, in different sense modalities and in different circumstances of perception.

(EP) raises a serious problem, though. For it is prima facie plausible for us implicitly at least to accept the best scientific-physical theories as providing essential substantive revisions to our initial commonsense explanations (E1)-(E6) of our perceptual experience by appeal to the physical objects that we perceive. Thus, we may be inclined to defer ultimately to fundamental scientific-physics for the complete and correct articulation of such explanations. Call this the scientific implementation of (EP).

On this way of thinking, the correct and genuinely explanatory explanations of the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience of physical objects are to be given only in the language of fundamental scientific-physics. This in turn determines the natures of the objects whose mind-independence is thereby secured by (EP). For these are the entities whose natures are explanatorily relevant in such fundamental scientific-physical explanations. Thus, insofar as (EP) provides a correct account of how their mind-independence shows up from the perceptual perspective, physical objects themselves must be conceived as mereological sums, over regions of space and time, or perhaps some other kind of composition, of whatever turn out to be the most basic elements of the correct fundamental scientific-physical theory.

The theoretical conception that most of us have of what such things are actually like is obviously extremely primitive. Indeed, as we saw in ch. 2 above, Lewis (2009) presents a powerful argument for the claim that we are irremediably ignorant of the intrinsic natures of their fundamental scientific-physical components.⁶ In any case, it is quite clear that these are not the very things that we are presented with in perception. For, as I recalled from ch. 3 at the outset, perceptual presentation provides us with at least a rough and provisional conception of what the objects are with which we are presented; and we have no conception whatsoever of what the most fundamental scientific-physical primitives are simply on the basis of perception. So we have no conception whatsoever of what any simple mereological sum or composition of such things might be either. The objects whose mind-independence is

⁶ See § 7.3 below for my own response to this important argument.

Realism and Explanation

ultimately secured by the current scientific implementation of (EP) are therefore not presented to us in perception. Thus, the scientific implementation of (EP) is incompatible with empiricism as defined above.

This approach to explaining the way in which the mind-independence of the physical objects that we perceive shows up from our own perspective as perceivers apparently compels us to accept that those mind-independent objects are not the very things that are presented to us in perception after all, at least not in the demanding sense in which this provides us with at least a rough and provisional conception of what the objects are with which we are so presented. This rejection of empiricism is really not a viable option though. For empiricism plays an absolutely fundamental role in setting the domain for the whole debate. The question that we are interested in as perceivers of the physical world of stones, tables, trees, people and other animals around us, and, indeed, as philosophical theorists who are also perceivers of such things, is what is the metaphysical status of those very things? Arriving at the conclusion that some quite different domain of entities somehow related to our perception is truly mind-independent is of little or no significance to us.

At this point, then, there appear to be three options. First, we may try to live with some form of anti-realism concerning the physical world of such things as stones, tables, trees, people and other animals, perhaps attempting to soften the blow by going along with Berkeley's (1975a, 1975b) strategy of insisting nevertheless that a great deal that we take to be indicative of realism may nevertheless be maintained. Second, we may reject the whole (EP) approach and attempt to explain how the mind-independence of the physical objects that are genuinely presented to us in perception

Realism and Explanation

shows up from our own perceptual perspective in some quite different way. Third, we may retain (EP) and yet insist upon an alternative to its scientific implementation.

This third option is my own preferred response; and I develop and defend an alternative commonsense implementation of (EP) in § 7.2 that follows.

7.2 Explanation, Realism and Commonsense-Physics

(EP) is absolutely the right strategy for securing realism from our own perspective as perceivers in my view, for the reasons set out in § 7.1 above. The unacceptable consequence of undermining empiricism that follows from its scientific implementation may however be avoided. It is correct to explain how the mind-independence of the physical objects that we perceive shows up from the perceptual perspective on the basis of our conception of those very objects as the explanatory grounds of the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience of them from various different points of view, in different sense modalities and in different circumstances of perception. It is a mistake, though, to accept that fundamental scientific-physical explanation is required to provide and characterize what are therefore phenomenologically mysterious targets of this identification. The key lies, instead, in our initial commonsense-physical explanations themselves, which I claim are in excellent standing absolutely as they are, in no need of any scientific-physical revision.

Thus, the scientific-physical option outlined above, and incompatible with empiricism, is not the only possible implementation of (EP). An alternative commonsense implementation is available that preserves empiricism and is also in my

Realism and Explanation

view a perfectly stable and adequate explication of how realism shows up from our own perspective as perceivers of the physical world. The explanatory standing of our initial commonsense-physical explanations of perceptual appearances as they stand is sufficient to secure the mind-independence of the physical objects that are presented to us in perception. Furthermore these commonsense-physical explanations are in absolutely no need of any substantive revision and correction by anything from scientific-physics. For they have features that any purported scientific-physical explanations of perceptual appearances lack that are crucially relevant to precisely this project of securing empirical realism from our own perceptual perspective. These features simultaneously establish the autonomous explanatory standing of commonsense-physical explanations and avoid the unacceptable anti-empiricist consequences that come with the move to scientific-physics in elucidation of realism.⁷

To begin with, then, recall that the explanatory standing of commonsense-physical explanations of the actual and counterfactual order and nature of our perceptual experience of physical objects by appeal to the familiar perceptible natures of those very things, along with our point of view and other relevant circumstances of perception, depends upon our appreciation of the individuating priority of the natures of the physical objects presented in perception themselves relative to their various appearances. For the latter appearances are explicitly individuated in terms of the prior natures of the physical objects that they present. Thus, in my toy examples, the

⁷ Note that it is entirely compatible with this fundamental role for commonsense-physical explanations that these may be elaborated and refined to some extent on the basis research in the psychology of vision, say. This holds no threat along the lines of that elaborated above in connection with the scientific-physical implementation of (EP). For the commonsense nature of the world of mind-independent physical objects that we perceive is simply taken for granted in advancing and testing the relevant explanatory hypotheses.

Realism and Explanation

explananda visual appearances are individuated explicitly in terms of the shape and colour properties that they (apparently) present: as the coin's looking circular or elliptical, and the jumper's looking red or mauve. As we saw above in connection with the standard account of secondary qualities, if the order of individuation priority were the reverse, then insofar as the offered explanations offer anything genuinely explanatory this would inevitably point towards imperceptible grounding properties of the physical objects in question. The definitive feature of commonsense-physical explanations, that these appeal precisely to the familiar perceptible natures of physical objects in explaining their perceptual appearances, would be lost entirely.

Most importantly at this stage of the argument, commonsense-physical explanations of the order and nature of perceptual experience by appeal to the perceptible properties of the physical objects that we perceive have two distinctive features that make them far superior for the purpose of elucidating empirical realism to anything available at the level of scientific-physical explanation. First, what I call their explanatory robustness avoids the purported need for any scientific-physical revision of commonsense-physical explanations in connection with securing realism from the perceptual perspective on the basis of (EP). Second, the particular realization of the priority relation between the natures of the physical objects that constitute the explanantia of such explanations and the appearances that are their explananda ensure in contrast with the scientific implementation of (EP) considered in § 7.1 above that empiricism is preserved. I take these two points in turn.

First, in comparison with any candidate scientific-physical explanations of perceptual appearances, commonsense-physical explanations are robust. That is to say, they

Realism and Explanation

maximize modal correlation with the perceptual appearances that they explain in the following sense. All other things being equal, objects with quite different scientific-physical properties that share the same commonsense-physical properties will appear in the same way; and what unifies the various respects in which their scientific-physical properties might differ in such a way as to alter these appearances is precisely that these are precisely those scientific-physical variations that significantly alter the commonsense explanatory properties in question.

By way of illustration from a related area independent of perceptual appearances, compare Putnam's (1978) famous observation that the best explanation of the fact that a given one inch square peg passes through a one inch square hole and not through a one inch round hole is given by citing its size and shape. All other things being equal, it is precisely this property – one inch squareness – whose presence facilitates, and absence obstructs, its passage. Any proposed move in the direction of scientific-physical explanation by appeal to lattices of elementary particles and the like reduces this robust modal generality. For one inch square pegs of quite different materials equally pass through a one inch square hole and not through a one inch round hole, regardless of the fact that the scientific-physical properties involved in explanation of their motion and interaction are quite different; and whatever their scientific-physical differences may be – within reason⁸ – appropriately sized pegs that are not square will not pass through a one inch square hole, and square pegs greater than one inch in side will not do so either. Thus, all other things being equal, the scientific-physical differences between pegs that do, and pegs that do not, pass through a one inch square hole but not through a one inch round hole, are explanatorily unified as those in which

⁸ Excluding, for example, pegs made of material that dissolves the sides of the hole and so on.

Realism and Explanation

the peg is one inch square versus those in which it is not. This is what I mean by the explanatory virtue of robustness.

In just this way, in connection with the explanations of our perceptual experience of physical objects that are central to (EP), commonsense-physical explanations are robust in comparison with scientific-physical explanations. The most robust explanation of why a coin looks circular to Janet viewing it head on and elliptical to John viewing it from a specific angle is given by citing its stable circular shape and their different points of view, not by appeal to the way in which its fundamental scientific-physical properties affect their respective perceptual systems. For, other things being equal, similarly circular objects of quite different materials look equally circular and elliptical respectively, to them and to other observers, from these same points of view, regardless of the fact that what is going on in scientific-physical terms may be quite different; and the scientific-physical changes to such objects that would alter these appearances are precisely those that significantly affect the commonsense-physical explanatory shape. This, rather than anything specific at the scientific-physical level is what unifies the objects that look circular and elliptical from these respective points of view as against those that do not. Thus, commonsense-physical explanations of such appearances have the explanatory virtue of robustness.

Again, I contend, the most robust explanation of why a jumper looks red outdoors and mauve in the store is given by citing its red colour and the relevant variation between normal and artificially dingy lighting conditions, not by appeal to the way in which its fundamental scientific-physical properties affect viewers' perceptual systems in the two conditions. For, other things being equal, similarly red objects of quite different

Realism and Explanation

materials look equally red and mauve respectively in these same lighting conditions, regardless of the fact that what is going on in scientific-physical terms may be quite different; and the scientific-physical changes to such objects that would alter these appearances are precisely those that significantly affect the commonsense-physical explanatory colour. This, rather than anything specific at the scientific-physical level is what unifies the objects that look red and mauve in these respective lighting conditions as against those that do not. Thus, commonsense-physical explanations of such appearances again have the explanatory virtue of robustness.⁹

Having said all this, there is no obvious conflict, so far as I can see, between the robustness of commonsense-physical explanations of perceptual appearances of the kind involved in (EP), on the one hand, and the equal robustness of fundamental scientific-physical explanations of closely related but distinct phenomena, on the other. For example, it may well be that the most robust explanation of certain highly specific retinal or neural phenomena that are involved in and indeed enable our perception of some red objects in some circumstances are most robustly explained by appeal to the very specific scientific-physical properties of the light arriving at the eye reflected from the surfaces of such objects. That is to say, I see no good reason in what has been said here to deny that commonsense-physics and scientific-physics are two perfectly compatible but quite distinct explanatory projects running in parallel and in no real competition with each other.¹⁰ In any case, the key point from this

⁹ Notice that in extending the commonsense-physical explanatory picture in this way to secondary quality appearances, such as those of an object's colour, I am explicitly rejecting the standard model of the primary vs. secondary quality distinction set out above. See, again, Campbell (1993) for discussion and defence of this idea. Note, though, that this extension is not essential to the main argument of the current work.

¹⁰ See Hornsby (1986a, 1986b, 1994), McDowell (1985a), Campbell (1993), Burge (1994), Rudder Baker (1994) and Brewer (1998) for examples of this idea in

Realism and Explanation

discussion is that commonsense-physical explanations have the virtue of robustness over candidate scientific-physical explanations in connection with the perceptual appearances that figure in (EP).

This provides an illustration of how and why any blanket explanatory reductionism is to be rejected, where this is the crude idea that the best explanation of anything going on in the physical world is ultimately to be given in terms of fundamental scientific-physics. It certainly blocks directly any suggestion, however prima facie plausible, that the commonsense physical explanations of perceptual appearances that we began with in setting out (EP) are essentially subject to substantive revision by scientific-physics, in a way that then threatens empiricism as I understand it here. There is no such general obligation; and thus, so far at least, such commonsense-physical explanations are in perfectly good explanatory standing absolutely as they are.

There may be another worry about their explanatory status, though. For the properties of physical objects that are involved sound very much like the perceptual appearances that they are invoked to explain. How can the fact that something is red, or round, say, be a genuine explanation of the fact that it looks red, or round? It is far from obvious what the general necessary condition on satisfactory explanation is supposed to be that is failed by such explanations. Furthermore, I explain below how the close individuating relation between the natures of objects and appearances involved here is crucial to the preservation of empiricism. So this actually constitutes a benefit to the position rather than any kind of cost in my view. Still, it is worth emphasizing two points about commonsense-physical explanations that should in any case silence this

connection with the relation between commonsense and scientific explanations of human behaviour.

Realism and Explanation

general line of objection. First, an object may clearly be F (red, or round, for example) without looking E, because it is not seen at all; because although it is seen the subject is attending exclusively to certain other features, and so only has eyes for them, as it were; or because it is seen in misleading perceptual conditions and so looks G instead.¹¹ Second, an object may look F and yet not be E, again due to any number of variously misleading perceptual circumstances. So insofar as the general worry is that there is insufficient modal independence between explanans and explanandum for commonsense-physical explanations to get any genuine explanatory purchase, then this seems to me to be simply false.

I conclude therefore that the commonsense implementation of (EP) suffices as it stands to secure realism as defined at the outset from our own perspective as perceivers of the mind-independent physical world as articulated by (OV). Physical objects are the mind-independent direct objects of our perceptual experience; their nature is entirely independent of their appearance, and not in any way a matter of how they do or might appear to anyone; and their mind-independence is evident from our own perceptual perspective in virtue of our commonsense-physical explanation of the order and nature of our experience on the basis of the prior and independent perceptible nature of those very objects.

¹¹ Note that the latter two circumstances yield cases in which o does not thickly look E, although it may thinly do so. In the nature of the case, though, it is bound to be thick looks that are subject to explanation of the kind in question. For acknowledgement of the explanandum essentially involves the conceptual registration of visually relevant similarities characteristic of thick looks. So the crucial point holds that these are all possibilities in which the explanans obtains although the explanandum does not.

Realism and Explanation

Furthermore, in avoiding the need for any substantive revision of commonsense-physical explanations by scientific-physics, this version of (EP) avoids the loss of empiricism that I argued above comes with any such move. I end this section by explaining in a little more detail how exactly this commonsense implementation also positively secures empiricism. This is the second point that I distinguished above: the particular realization of the priority relation between the natures of the physical objects that constitute the explanantia of such explanations and the appearances that are their explananda ensures in contrast with the scientific implementation of (EP) considered earlier that empiricism is preserved.

The standard account of primary qualities outlined earlier lies at the heart of the commonsense implementation of (EP). According to the current approach, this model applies to all the properties of physical objects and their appearances that figure in commonsense explanations of our perceptual experience.¹² That is to say, the natures of the perceptual appearances to be explained are characterized precisely as the subjective presentation of certain specific and independently individuated properties of physical objects in the world around the perceiver. Even in illusory cases, in which something that is F looks G, say, the appearance in question transparently presents the object as being a specific way that such things may be, although this one is in fact not. In the normal veridical case, something's looking F makes absolutely evident which way that very thing out there is. The explanatory ground of that very appearance in its mind-independent object's F-ness itself is entirely transparent to the subject in that

¹² Note again that my inclusion of secondary quality explanations of perceptual experience such as (E4)-(E5) above, alongside primary quality explanations such as (E1)-(E3), marks a significant departure from orthodoxy by embracing the secondary qualities under the familiar primary quality model. See Campbell (1993) for defence of this 'Simple View'.

Realism and Explanation

very experience. Hence physical objects really are the very things that we are presented with in experience – our perception of them provides us with at least a rough provisional conception of what such physical objects are. Thus the commonsense implementation of (EP) also preserves empiricism as defined above.¹³

So the mind-independent physical world is the world of the familiar macroscopic objects that we all know and love; and the physical objects whose mind-independence shows up from our own perspective as perceivers on the basis of the commonsense implementation of (EP) are precisely those objects with which we are genuinely presented in perception. Commonsense (EP) secures and elucidates empirical realism.

7.3 Conclusions

In this final section I tie up some loose ends, clarify my overall conclusions and offer a number of short additional considerations concerning related topics.

Recall my conclusion from ch. 2 above, that a crucial necessary condition for sustaining empirical realism is the identification of the explanatory grounds of the actual and counterfactual nature of human perceptual experiences of physical objects with the direct objects of those very experiences. We are now in a position to see that this is precisely what is achieved by the development of (OV) that I have offered.

¹³ My point is not that the application of the primary quality model here rules out the innatist claim that natural selection, for example, leaves us with an innate propensity to think of physical objects as persisting, unified, extended space occupants. It is rather that its vindication of the empiricist idea that perception itself is a genuine source of such a conception of what mind-independent physical objects are reduces very significantly the theoretical need for any appeal along these lines to innate endowment. See ch. 3, n. 7 above; and see Ayers (1993, vol. I) for development of this kind of argument in Locke against the need for innate concepts and knowledge.

Realism and Explanation

Accordingly, the direct objects of perception are the mind-independent physical objects themselves that are the commonsense explanatory grounds of the nature of the various experiences that we actually do or counterfactually might have of those very things from various points of view, in various sense modalities and in various conditions of perception.

Certain of the perceptible properties of these mind-independent physical objects accordingly constitute a counterexample to a crucial premise of Lewis' argument for (HT). Recall his assumption from the outset that none of the intrinsic properties that play an active role in the actual working of the physical world are named in O-language, "except as occupants of roles" (Lewis, 2009, p. 000 (3)). Hence our only epistemic route onto the identities of such properties is supposed to be their identification as the properties that play such and such specific theoretical roles in relation to our observations. Given combinatorialism and quidditism, although there is a true proposition as to which intrinsic property actually plays each such specific theoretical role, there are distinct alternative possibilities that no evidence can ever rule out. So we cannot even in principle know which property actually plays which role. We are therefore irremediably of the nature of the intrinsic properties that play an active role in the working of the physical world. According to (OV) as developed here, though, in being presented with mind-independent physical objects themselves as the direct objects of our perception, we are perfectly adequately placed to name their active intrinsic properties in our O-language, without the need for any theoretical-descriptive intermediary. For the nature of these objects themselves determines in the way that I explained in ch. 5 above how the physical world looks to us in perception from various points of view and in various circumstances of

Realism and Explanation

perception. In normal circumstances, and viewed from the right angle, for example, a one inch square peg before me looks square; and its being that very shape is precisely what provides the most basic explanation, both of why it looks the that way it does, and also of why it behaves the way that it does in relation to other physical objects of various kinds, e.g. why it passes through a one inch square hole and not through a one inch round hole. Thus, Lewis' argument for (HT) is blocked before it even gets started, at least in connection with the relatively intrinsic properties that play an active role in certain of the workings of the mind-independent physical world that we perceive.

Of course Lewis himself assumes that the intrinsic properties that play an active role in the actual working of the physical world are all properties involved in fundamental scientific-physical explanations; and I agree with him that none of these are named in O-language except as occupants of roles. Part of my point in the present chapter has been to resist the reductionist assumption, though, that all the workings of the physical world are be explained in such scientific-physical terms. Thus, I claim that we are in a position to know some at least of the relatively intrinsic properties that play an active role in the working of the physical world directly on the basis of perception.

It is worth making a brief comment here also about a closely related argument that is due to Rae Langton (1998). Drawing on ideas from Kant (1929), Langton also argues that we are irremediably ignorant of the intrinsic nature of mind-independent physical objects, along the following lines. Physical objects are the very objects that we perceive. Perception is receptive in a way that involves a causal relation between such

Realism and Explanation

objects and our experiences of them that is incompatible with any kind of a priori relation between the physical object cause and the perceptual experience effect. Yet knowledge of the intrinsic nature of physical objects on the basis of perception depends upon such an a priori relation. For this is required to derive their intrinsic nature from their experiential effects upon us. No such knowledge is therefore possible. All that is available instead is relational knowledge of the mind-independent physical objects that we perceive as those objects that produce such and such experiences in us in such and such circumstances, whatever their intrinsic nature may be.

The simple reply on behalf of (OV) is that the receptivity involved in our perceptual relation with mind-independent physical objects is perfectly compatible with all that is required for our knowledge of the intrinsic nature of physical objects on the basis of our perception of them. In a way, this is the whole point of the position: to elucidate and vindicate empirical realism. (OV) is designed precisely to achieve this result. The receptivity of perception consists in the fact that mind-independent physical objects are the explanatory grounds of our various actual and counterfactual perceptual experiences of them from different spatiotemporal points of view, in different sense modalities and in different circumstances of perception. This is certainly compatible with the possibility that a mind-independent physical object, o, may be F and not look F – because it is not seen at all or not appropriately attended to, or because it is seen from a misleading point of view or in misleading circumstances.¹⁴ It is also compatible with the possibility of illusion in which o looks F although it is not actually F. Still, the intrinsic nature of such mind-independent physical objects is the

¹⁴ See again n. 11 above for clarification here.

Realism and Explanation

evident source of the way things look and otherwise perceptually appear to us in the way that I explained in § 5.3 above; and our perceptual experience is most fundamentally a matter of our direct conscious acquaintance with those very things. Thus, in normal circumstances, in which o looks F because it is F, our perceptual experience makes absolutely evident which way that very thing out there is. The explanatory ground of the appearance in o's F-ness itself is entirely transparent to the subject in that very experience. So knowledge of the nature of mind-independent physical objects is perfectly possible in our perception of them. No dubious derivation from anything else is required.¹⁵

This leaves at least the following two options open in diagnosing the precise error in Langton's Kantian argument. I myself am inclined to accept that the explanatory grounding relation constitutive of the receptivity of perception is causal at least in the sense that explanations such as (E1)-(E6) above are genuinely causal explanations. It absolutely does not follow, though, that the phenomenon of a particular circular coin's looking circular to me when viewed from head on, say, is something from which I could only possibly arrive at a conception of the coin's intrinsic shape by some kind of derivation on the basis of an a priori relation between the two that is ruled out by the causal explanation in question. My perceptual condition is rather one of direct visual acquaintance with that very coin, which de facto has visually relevant similarities, from the point of view and in the circumstances in question, with various paradigm exemplars of circularity, along perhaps with my conceptual registration of those very similarities in categorizing it as circular. Even though it looks circular

¹⁵ Note again that this is knowledge in the first instance of specific determinations of the general nature of the objects in question as persisting, unified, extended space occupants.

Realism and Explanation

(causally-explanatorily) because it is circular, then, its circular look is perfectly transparent to its intrinsic circular shape: its look is my registration in perception of that very shape.

Alternatively, it may be said that the explanatory grounding relation in which mind-independent physical objects stand to our various actual and counterfactual perceptual experiences of them is non-causal. After all, each such experience is most fundamentally a matter of the subject standing in a relation of conscious acquaintance, from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality and in certain specific circumstances of perception, with particular such objects themselves. Still, the way that they actually do and counterfactually might look in perception is to be explained by their intrinsic nature along with the relevant point of view and circumstances in such a way as to acknowledge the receptivity of perception in a way that is compatible with the (OV) account of how our perceptual experience presents us with the mind-independent physical objects around us in such a way in turn as to make our knowledge of their intrinsic nature perfectly intelligible.¹⁶

It is far from obvious to me at least that there is even a single unequivocal issue here – perhaps explanatory grounding according to (OV) is causal in some admissible senses and not in others. In any case, either way, Langton's Kantian argument fails.

I began my discussion in ch. 1 with the following Inconsistent Triad of claims about the nature of perceptual experience and its objects.

¹⁶ See ch. 6 above for more on epistemological issues.

Realism and Explanation

- (I) Physical objects are mind-independent.
- (II) Physical objects are the direct objects of perception.
- (III) The direct objects of perception are mind-dependent.

Reflection in ch. 2 on the options offered by Berkeley's (1975a, 1975b) rejection of (I) and also on three structurally similar more modern metaphysical options driven by Lewis' argument for (HT) suggested a necessary condition upon any fully adequate defence of empirical realism. This is the condition discussed above that the explanatory grounds of our perceptual experience should be the direct objects of those very experiences. Ch. 3 brought out the deep tension between any indirect realist rejection of (II) along the lines articulated by Locke (1975) and the pre-theoretic intuition that we are presented with mind-independent physical objects in perception in such a way as to provide us with at least rough and provisional conception of what such objects are.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, therefore, the key to resolving the inconsistency is to reject (III).

The orthodox rejection of (III) effectively denies that there are any direct objects of perception in the early modern sense that is my defining context for this key notion throughout. I argued in ch. 4 that the resultant position, (CV), faces its own difficulties in accounting for illusion and hallucination that in turn derive from its fundamental failure satisfactorily to reconfigure the phenomenon of the perceptual

¹⁷ I should perhaps say a little more cautiously that this is a pre-theoretic intuition at least amongst the very broadly empiricist-minded. I have tried to demonstrate over the course of the book that my own preferred (OV) account of the nature of perceptual experience succeeds in sustaining such empiricist presumptions. I claim that this neutralizes any argument to the effect that some form of innatist alternative is required to fill what would otherwise be a damaging explanatory gap. See again ch. 3, n. 8; and see Ayers (1993, vol. I) for development of this kind of argument in Locke against the need for innate concepts and knowledge.

Realism and Explanation

experiential presentation of particular mind-independent physical objects outside this early modern context.

Thus, I advanced my own (OV) in ch. 5. This insists upon a simple rejection of (III). Perceptual experience is most fundamentally a matter of a person standing in a relation of conscious acquaintance, from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality and in certain specific circumstances of perception, with various mind-independent physical objects in the world around him that therefore constitute the direct objects of his experience in the early modern sense. The direct objects of perception are mind-independent physical objects themselves and the truth of empirical realism consists in the natural pretheoretically compelling conjunction of (I) and (II). (OV) offers what I claim is a fully satisfactory explanation of both illusion and hallucination, along with a rich and appropriately nuanced account of the various ways that mind-independent physical objects look in perception. Furthermore, as I outlined in ch. 6, (OV) provides an excellent setting for a fully satisfying positive epistemological account of the role of perceptual experience as a source of empirical knowledge.

In the main body of the present chapter I completed the development of the (OV)'s account of empirical realism by explaining how the mind-independence of the physical objects that we perceive shows up from our own perspective as perceivers in a way that is also perfectly compatible with the empiricist idea that we are genuinely presented with these very things in perceptual experience. The key is our commitment to commonsense-physical explanations of the actual and counterfactual order and

Realism and Explanation

nature of our perceptual experience on the basis of the perceptible natures of the very mind-independent physical objects that we perceive.

In this way I conclude that (OV) provides the only fully adequate setting for a complete elucidation and defence of empirical realism.

I end with some thoughts concerning the interaction between offering and evaluating a philosophical theory of the nature of perceptual experience, on the one hand, and articulating the subject's own perspective upon the physical world in perception, on the other. The former was my core concern in chs. 1-6 above; the latter came to the fore in the current ch. 7.

(OV) is in the first instance a philosophical theory concerning the nature of our perceptual relation with the physical world. Its central proposal is that perceptual experience is most fundamentally a matter of a person standing in a relation of conscious acquaintance, from a given spatiotemporal point of view, in a particular sense modality and in certain specific circumstances of perception, with various mind-independent physical objects in the world around him. The basic idea is that mind-independent physical objects themselves are in this way the direct objects of perception in what I have been call the early modern sense. That is to say, any given perceptual experience is most fundamentally to be characterized, as the specific conscious condition that it is, as a case of conscious acquaintance, from a point of view, in a particular sense modality and in certain circumstances, with particular mind-independent physical objects. The nature of the experience itself is to be

Realism and Explanation

elucidated by reference to those very things that are presented in perception. We can now see that this idea has a number of interrelated components.

First, the mind-independent physical direct objects of perception are the very objects that are perceptually presented and are the source of the way that things look to the subject in experience: o thinly looks F iff o is the direct object of a visual experience from a point of view and in circumstances relative to which o has visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of F; o thickly looks F iff o thinly looks F and the subject recognizes it as an F, or registers its visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of F in an active application of that very concept.

Second, this account of the way in which the direct objects of perception determine how things look in perceptual experience depends upon the individuating priority of their nature over the various looks and other appearances that show upon in our experience of them that is constitutive according to (OV) of their mind-independence. For the way that things look just is a matter of the way those things are in visually relevant respects from the point of view and in the circumstances in question.

Furthermore, and third, as well as the various ways that things look in perception, as thus determined, this individuating priority itself shows up from perceiver's own perspective in the way in which his experience is integrated with the commonsense-physical explanations that are correctly given of how mind-independent physical objects do and might look from various points of view and in various circumstances on the basis of their prior and independent, although perfectly perceptible, nature itself. Thus, the mind-independence of the physical direct objects of perception that is

Realism and Explanation

central to the philosophical theory (OV) is evident from the perceiver's perspective according to my development of (OV) in his understanding of the way in which such objects determine the way that things look as elucidated by (OV) itself.

I began this final phase of my discussion by raising the issue of the appropriate interaction between offering and evaluating a philosophical theory of the nature of perceptual experience, on the one hand, and articulating the subject's own perspective upon the world in perception, on the other. I do not remotely presume to have given any general recipe for such interaction. All I offer is some further clarification as to how the interaction is supposed to work in the context of (OV) as developed and defended here. Thus, philosophical theory and subjective characterization are not simply consistent, but mutually supporting in what I take to be an illuminating way. The philosophical theory (OV) offers and explains an accurate characterization of our own subjective perspective upon the mind-independent physical world in perception that in turn confirms and secures key features of the philosophical theory itself. In particular, I insist that the mind-independence of the physical objects that we perceive, and that are the direct objects of perception according to (OV), has to show up in the way that I explain from the subject's own perspective in perception itself if this is not to be a gratuitous addition to the theory that effectively imposes upon it without justification our pre-theoretic commitment to realism. A fully satisfying defence of realism depends upon its adequate grounding in the nature of perceptual experience from the perceiver's own perspective as an experiential perspective upon an evidently mind-independent physical world of the stones, tables, trees, people and other animals that we all know and love. I contend that (OV) succeeds in providing

Realism and Explanation

just such an integrated elucidation and defence of empirical realism from the theoretical and perceptual perspectives.