

Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Book Symposium

Précis of Perception and Reason¹

What is the role of conscious perceptual experience in making thought about the mind-independent empirical world possible? What is the role of such experience in the acquisition of empirical knowledge, about the way things are in that world? What is the relation between these two roles? My central argument is intended to establish that a proper account of the way in which perceptual experience is essential to our grasp of determinate thoughts about particular things in the world around us will at the same time yield a full explanation of the fundamental role which such experience plays in the acquisition of empirical knowledge, by providing us with reasons, which we recognize as such, to endorse the most basic thoughts about mind-independent things in belief.

The empirical world is a world of persisting, spatially extended and located particulars and their changing properties over time. I take it for granted that we refer to such things in thought - in the most basic cases, when we perceive them in our current environment - and that we frequently know that we are doing so. Consider a person, S, with a perceptually-based belief about a particular mind-independent thing, a; and suppose that S actually knows that he is referring to a. Assume, for reductio, that S's Idea of a is purely descriptive.² That is, his conception of which thing a is is exhausted by a wholly general description, 'The F', which purports to identify a by reference to its own properties and its spatial and other relations with other things which are also identified purely descriptively. Thus, his entertaining the Idea is quite independent of any experience of the object in question. However detailed and extensive this description of a may be, though, it is bound to be an epistemic possibility for S that 'F' is multiply satisfied, in the following sense. It is logically consistent with all that S knows that 'F' is satisfied by more than one thing. For

¹References to Brewer, 1999, are indicated throughout simply by 'P&R'.

²See Evans, 1982, pp. 104 ff. for elucidation of this notion of a person's Idea of an object.

he cannot knowledgeably rule out the possibility of a massive qualitative reduplication elsewhere in the universe of the relevant sector of his environment.³ So there is a possible world in which ‘F’ is multiply satisfied and everything which S actually knows is true. Thus, there is a possible world in which ‘F’ is multiply satisfied and S refers as he does to a; for that he does so is something which he knows. This is a contradiction. For in that case, ‘The F’ fails to refer. Hence S’s Idea of a cannot be purely descriptive after all. It must involve some kind of demonstrative component, with respect to which his experience is essential to his grasp of which object is in question.⁴ Perceptual reference of this kind is therefore essentially experiential. In the absence of experience of that thing, S has no understanding of what it would be for ‘That is ϕ ’ to be true. For he has no conception whatsoever of which thing it is who’s being ϕ or not determines the truth or falsity of that content. So he cannot have any such belief. Hence the most basic beliefs about the empirical world have the contents which they do - that a particular mind-independent thing is determinately thus and so - only in virtue of their standing in certain relations with various perceptual experiences.⁵

What kinds of relations between perceptual experiences and beliefs are required to meet this condition upon determinate empirical content? I claim that these must be reason-giving relations, providing the subject with reasons, which he recognizes as such, for the relevant beliefs. The following Switching Argument is intended to establish this.⁶ Suppose that the relevant content-determining relations are not reason-giving relations. Consider a

³The underlying equivalence here can be demonstrated as follows. Suppose that S is a person, p a proposition, and K_S the conjunction of every proposition which S knows. It is epistemically possible for S that $p \Leftrightarrow$ it is logically possible that $[K_S \ \& \ p] \Leftrightarrow \{K_S, p\}$ is consistent \Leftrightarrow ‘K_S, therefore not-p’ is invalid \Leftrightarrow S cannot argue validly from what he actually knows to not-p \Leftrightarrow S is not in a position knowledgeably to rule out that p.

⁴See P&R, 2.3, esp. pp. 40-45, for further argument to exclude the following two possible alternatives: (1) although a purely descriptive account is untenable, basic perceptual reference to mind-independent particulars may be modelled upon the use of proper names, or descriptions embedding non-experiential indexicals; (2) although demonstratives are indeed required to account for such reference these are not essentially experiential.

⁵This Strawson Argument draws heavily upon Strawson, 1959, ch. 1, pt. 1, and is developed in some detail over the course of P&R, ch. 2.

⁶See Peacocke, 1988, for characterization and discussion of arguments of this general form. This particular Switching Argument is the focus of P&R, ch. 3.

person, S, who believes that p, where this is supposed to be an empirical belief, about how things are in the mind-independent world around him. Since their relations with certain perceptual experiences play an essential role in the determination of the contents of empirical beliefs, there is a range of alternative such beliefs - beliefs which he might have had instead - whose difference in content with his actual belief that p would have been due entirely to their standing in the relevant relations with different perceptual experiences. Suppose that the belief that q is one of these.

So, the situation is this. S actually believes that p, because his actual perceptual experiences determine this, as opposed to q, as the empirical content of his belief. He does not believe that q. Had his perceptual experience been appropriately different, though, his position would have been precisely the reverse: he would have believed that q, and not believed that p. Yet the relevant content-determining relations between experiences and beliefs are not reason-giving relations. So S's actual perceptual experiences give him no more reason to believe that p than to believe that q. Thus, he has, and could have, no reason whatsoever to believe that p rather than that q, or vice versa. For, recall, nothing other than their relations with experiences decides between the two contents - this is how q was introduced. Which belief he actually has is due entirely to the course of his perceptual experience. Any supposed difference between believing that p and believing that q is therefore absolutely nothing to him; for there could be no reason for him to decide between them. So he does not really understand them as alternatives. Believing that p and believing that q are identical for him. Hence the supposedly content-determining role of S's perceptual experiences is empty. For there is nothing more, or less, to the content of a belief than the way the subject takes the world to be, which I have argued must be identical in the actual and counterfactual cases considered. Thus, if the relevant relations between experiences and beliefs are not reason-giving relations, then they contribute nothing to the determination of specific worldly truth-conditions for empirical beliefs.

This may all sound a little abstract; but the crucial point is really quite simple. It can be brought home by the failure of a putative counterexample. Of course, it might be admitted, empirical beliefs draw essentially for their contents upon certain relations with perceptual experiences; but these need not be reason-giving relations, in the relevant sense. Perhaps experiences 'indicate' worldly phenomena in virtue of various systematic causal relations in which they stand with them; and this empirical significance is transmitted in turn to the beliefs to which these experiences themselves give rise. Thus, empirical contents are secured for beliefs by their non-reason-giving relations with experiences. For, although these experiences stand in various relations with the worldly phenomena which they are thereby supposed to indicate, they do nothing to make beliefs about just those phenomena any more appropriate from the subject's point of view, than beliefs about any alternative such phenomena, which might reliably have caused the relevant experiences instead.

A familiar, although in my view mistaken, account of our experiences of, and beliefs about, secondary qualities provides an illustrative example of the proposal. On this view, sensations of certain immediately recognizable types constitute our experiences of the secondary qualities of the things around us, in virtue of the systematic causal relations between the two. The sensations in question are specific modifications of conscious experience, the subject's recognition of which, on any particular occasion, as tokens of the relevant types, is supposed to be unproblematic: subjectively evident, or 'given'. The corresponding secondary qualities of objects in the world are those microphysical properties, or massive disjunctions of such, which causally explain the occurrence of sensations of the type in question in normal observers under normal circumstances. Peacocke's introduction of 'primed predicates' (1983, pp. 20 ff.) helps to clarify the position. Red' experiences are those which, as it happens, are normally produced by red objects. Correlatively, red objects are those which normally produce red' experiences. Although the former claim serves to introduce the notion of observational predicate priming, it is the latter which captures the correct order of explanation. For token red' experiences are unproblematically identifiable by their subject as experiences of a single subjective type.

Red objects are those which have the (perhaps massively disjunctive) microphysical property which normally produces red' experiences: this defines what redness in the world actually is. Red' experiences indicate the presence of red objects in virtue of the reliable relations between them. Beliefs that things are red acquire their content, in turn, as beliefs that things have just that colour - which is that microphysical property - on the basis of their relations with red' experiences. They are precisely the beliefs which are normally formed in response to such experiences. This is what makes them beliefs that the things in question are red.

On this account, the crucial content-determining relations between experiences and beliefs are not reason-giving relations. For having a red' experience in itself gives the subject no more reason to believe that there is something in front of him with the microphysical structure constitutive of something's being red than to believe that there is something there with any other such structure. It is simply the occurrence of a sensation of a particular identifiable type, which is intrinsically no more appropriately associated with that structure than with any other. Nevertheless, it is supposed to indicate the presence of just that microphysical property, as opposed to any other, because that is the property which happens to be its normal cause. Hence it is that property which he believes is instantiated when he believes that there is something red in front of him. His beliefs about redness therefore acquire their empirical significance in virtue of the relations they bear to red'-type experiences, even though these experiences give him no reason to take the world to contain just that property rather than any other. Indeed, had it been a quite different property in the world which happened to be the normal cause of red' sensations, then his beliefs about redness would, on this account, have been beliefs about that instead, regardless of the fact that what is supposed to provide such beliefs with their determinate content - namely their relations with red' experiences - is exactly the same in both cases.

The consequence of this proposal, then, is that the putative source of the empirical content of beliefs about redness in the world is, as far as the subject himself is concerned,

entirely neutral on which property of things their redness actually turns out to be. In believing that there is something red in front of him, a person is bound to be believing that there is something which is some way or other which things can be, and sometimes are, out there. Furthermore, given that redness is defined as the normal cause of red' sensations, he will normally be right that there is something that way in front of him. Yet he has not the slightest idea which way this is. Hence it must be wrong to claim that he nevertheless believes that the thing in question is just that way rather than any other. So the account under consideration fails after all to provide a satisfactory explanation of the contents of a person's beliefs about the colours of things around him. Once again, any genuinely content-determining relations between experiences and beliefs must be reason-giving.

This completes the case here for my first central claim:

(R) Perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs.⁷

The most significant immediate consequence of (R) is the failure of any pure reliabilist account of perceptual knowledge.⁸ For the defining feature of pure reliabilism is the claim that the epistemic standing of true perceptual beliefs rests entirely upon the de facto reliability of the particular perceptual method of belief acquisition involved. The epistemic support which such reliability provides need not be evident to the subject herself in any way. Yet (R) insists that, if there are to be determinate beliefs about particular mind-independent things at all, then perceptual experiences must provide reasons for them, whose status as the reasons which they are is in some way evident to the subject. This is the recognition requirement upon genuine reasons, for the subject. Classical foundationalism and classical coherentism in epistemology each in its way aims to capture this insight. For

⁷P&R, 3.2-3.5 contain extended discussion of the following two counters to the Switching Argument. First, the non-reason-giving account is not committed to a person's ignorance of the semantic values of certain of the concepts figuring in the contents of his empirical beliefs. Second, although a non-reason-giving account is committed to a limited form of ignorance of semantic value, this perfectly compatible with the relevant beliefs having just those contents all the same.

⁸See P&R, 4.1 for a far more detailed criticism of reliabilism. The comments on foundationalism and coherentism below are also elaborated in detail in 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

both acknowledge that the status of perception as a source of knowledge rests, not only upon the fact that it is a reliable source of belief, but also upon the fact that the subject herself is in a position to recognize this reliability. Both are second-order accounts of the truth of (R), in the following sense. Perception meets the recognition requirement only by the subject's second-order reflection upon the credentials of her first-order method of belief acquisition; and these two levels are independent in that she might on any particular occasion equally have acquired the very same belief by just the same first-order method and yet not have had the second-order knowledge of reliability in question.

In the case of classical foundationalism it works like this. Simply being subject to a given kind of experience in perception provides a person with direct, non-inferential knowledge of the way in which things appear to her in that experience; and she is also in a position to know that being appeared to in just that way is a reliable indicator that things are as she thereby believes them to be in the world around her. In the case of classical coherentism, the idea is this. We find ourselves with certain perceptually-based beliefs. Their source and relations with our other beliefs give them a strong likelihood of truth, and this is something which we can also come to know, by reflection upon the predominant truth of similarly acquired beliefs in the past and the normal survival of such beliefs through the extended process of scrutiny in the light of future similarly acquired beliefs.

I argue at length that the proposed second-order knowledge is in neither case available. The supposedly foundational knowledge of perceptual appearances in the first case is also multiply problematic. So both second-order accounts fail on their own terms. This should not really be surprising. For the key point in my elaboration of (R) is that the very existence of determinate empirical beliefs depends, at least in the most basic cases, upon the actual provision of reasons for such beliefs by the perceptual experiences upon which they causally depend. Yet any second-order account of the truth of (R) is committed to the view that the satisfaction of the recognition requirement upon this provision of reasons is in every case quite independent of the existence of the determinate empirical

beliefs themselves. We must therefore look to a first-order account, on which the truth of (R) emerges directly out of a correct account of a person's possession of certain beliefs about the mind-independent world around her. Satisfaction of the recognition requirement is integral to the subject's very possession of the empirical beliefs in question, essential to her grasp of their determinate contents, rather than the product of any independent second-order reflection upon the process by which she acquires such beliefs.

The first condition upon any such first-order account is that perceptual experiences should have conceptual contents. For:

(C) Reasons require conceptual contents.⁹

In other words, a person has a reason for believing something only if she is in some mental state or other with a conceptual content, where a content is conceptual if and only if (a) the way it represents the world as being is characterizable only in terms of concepts which the subject herself must possess if she is to be in a state with that content and (b) it is of a form which enables it to serve as a premise or the conclusion of a deductive argument, or of an inference of some other kind. My Basic Argument for (C) moves in two stages. The first makes explicit the connection between reasons and inference, and hence between giving reasons and identifying contents of a form which enables them to serve as the premises and conclusions of inferences. The second establishes a constraint upon genuine reasons - reasons for the subject - imposed by the way in which her own conceptual resources are available for the configuration of her mental states.

First, a reason is necessarily a reason for something, in our case, for endorsing a certain content in belief. To give a reason in this context is to identify some feature of the subject's situation which makes the relevant belief appropriate, or intelligible, from the point of view of rationality. Making something intelligible from the point of view of rationality in

⁹This claim is the focus of P&R, ch. 5.

this way necessarily involves at least identifying a valid deductive argument, or inference of some other kind, which articulates the source of the rational obligation (or permission) in question. This constitutes an explicit reconstruction of the reasoning in virtue of whose correctness this obligation (or permission) is sustained. So giving reasons in general involves identifying certain relevant propositions - those contents which figure as the premises and conclusions of inferences explicitly articulating the reasoning involved.

Second, we are interested here, not just in any old 'reasons' which there may be for believing something - such as its simply happening to be true, or beneficial in some mysterious way to the subject's overall well-being - but only in reasons for the subject to believe this: the subject's own reasons, which figure as such from her point of view, reasons, that is, which meet the recognition requirement. It follows from this, first, that the subject's having such a reason consists in her being in some mental state or other (although this may well be a mental state which is itself essentially factive). For any actually motivating reason for the subject must at the very least register at the personal level in this way: it must show up in her mental life. Second, it also follows that it cannot be the case that the proposition, reference to which is required for the characterization of the reason in question, is related to this mental state of the subject's merely indirectly, by the theorist in some way. Rather, it must actually be the content of her mental state in a sense which requires that the subject has all of its constituent concepts. Otherwise, even though being in some such state may make it advisable, relative to a certain end or need, for the subject to adopt the belief in question, it cannot provide her own reason for doing so, a reason whose status as such she actually recognizes in some way. Thus, reasons require what are, by my definition above, conceptual contents: this is thesis (C).

My question at this point is: how exactly do perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs? In a sentence, my answer is this. Perceptual experiences are essential to a person's grasp of certain demonstrative contents, whose reference to particular mind-independent objects and properties is achieved in such a way that his simply entertaining

these contents gives him a reason to endorse them in belief. The relevant perceptual demonstrative contents are expressible, in the first instance, only as 'That (perceptually presented thing) is thus'. Given the relevant facts about the way things are in the world around the perceiver, the direction and focus of his attention, and so on, which contents these are is beyond his control; and his grasp of such contents depends upon his actually standing in certain perceptual-attentional relations with the particular things to which they refer. I want to press further this issue, though, of exactly what is involved in his understanding, that is to say, his actually being the subject who is entertaining, these perceptual demonstrative contents. More specifically, to begin with, what is involved in his grasp of the embedded singular demonstrative Idea of the particular object in question?

This clearly depends upon far more than that thing's happening to be at the end of his pointing finger when he thinks 'That is thus'. He must have some conception of which object he is aiming for in his thought. For his grasp of what it is that he is thinking requires some such conception of which thing it is whose condition determines the truth or falsity of what he thinks. Let us suppose that he exploits the fact that the object in question is ϕ in latching onto that particular thing. In many cases, ϕ will be its location in relation to him; but it may not be. I argued at the outset that perceptual reference of this kind is essentially experiential. Yet if perceptual experience is to provide the subject with a genuine conception of the object in question as an element of the mind-independent world, then his understanding of what it is to be ϕ cannot be exhausted by the way in which this is currently presented in experience. If it were, then he would not be presented with anything as a mind-independent thing at all. He must instead recognize that the ϕ -appearance, as it were, which is accessible to him by immersion entirely within the contingencies of his present perspective, and suspending any reflection upon this perspective and its contribution to his experience as a whole, is the joint upshot of the mind-independent ϕ -condition of that object and the relevant features of his particular perspective upon it. In the case of location, then, he must have some appreciation of the fact that that very thing, precisely where it is now presented as being, might equally have been displayed, from complete immersion within his

own changed position, as standing in a different location in relation to him. Thus, the object is delineated in experience as something which is in itself independent of that or any other particular experiential access to it, even though some such experiential access is essential to thought of this kind about it at all. Similar points apply to the demonstrative predication, if this is to succeed in latching directly onto a genuinely mind-independent property of the object in question.¹⁰

With respect both to the singular and to the predicative components of perceptual demonstrative contents, then, the genuine mind-independence of their reference depends upon the subject's recognition of what they present as the categorical ground of the corresponding immersed 'appearances' from his present point of view in the present circumstances, and, equally, of the various alternative 'appearances' consequent upon different, possible but non-actual, points of view and circumstances, some of which he may be able to grasp in imaginative simulation. Hence, a subject of such contents necessarily recognizes that the way things currently 'appear', from immersed within his own perspective, is the joint upshot of the way things are anyway, in the mind-independent world around him, and his current point of view upon them and other relevant circumstances of perception. Only so is experience even capable of presenting such things as independent of that or any other experience. It is this too, I claim, which provides him with a reason, which he recognizes as such, to endorse those very contents in belief. For, simply in virtue of entertaining perceptual demonstrative contents of this kind, he recognizes that it is that thing, there in relation to him, and mind-independently thus, which is currently displayed - from where he is and in those circumstances - as apparently thus, quite close, a little off to the left of straight ahead, say. That is to say, he understands that his current apprehension that things are objectively thus and so in the world around him is in part due to the very fact that they are. He recognizes the relevant content as his apprehension of the facts, what I call his epistemic openness to the way things mind-independently are out there - he couldn't grasp that objective content if he did not.

¹⁰See P&R, 6.1, for more careful and detailed development of these ideas.

So, his experiences contribute essentially to his grasp of certain perceptual demonstrative contents. These contents refer to particular mind-independent things in the world around him, of which they predicate determinate mind-independent properties. In doing so, they provide him with a reason to endorse those very contents in belief. Simply in virtue of grasping the content that that (perceptually presented thing) is thus, he has a reason to believe that that thing is indeed thus; for he necessarily recognizes that his entertaining that content is a response to that thing's actually being thus, given his perspective upon it. I conclude, as promised in my opening paragraph, that the correct account of the sense in which perceptual experiences are experiences of mind-independent things, and therefore make thought about the empirical world possible - that is to say, the correct account of the reference of perceptual demonstratives to mind-independent particulars and their properties - is itself an account of the way in which such experiences provide reasons for the perceiver's beliefs about the way things are in the world around him.

Of course, purely demonstrative cases like these are at best the very beginnings of our perceptual knowledge. How are the basic perceptual demonstrative experiences and beliefs, whose nature, relations and epistemic qualifications have been my principal focus so far, related to the linguistically articulated and categorized beliefs which constitute the majority of a person's empirical knowledge? That is, how is the evident existence of categorial perceptual knowledge to be accommodated within the present framework? I think that this situation can usefully be illuminated by its close structural parallel with the way in which a person's practical skills may be extended by teaching and practice; but I focus here directly upon the epistemic case; and I discuss only the most basic transition, from knowledge that that (perceptually presented thing) is thus, as just elucidated, to knowledge that that is F.¹¹

¹¹The parallel with the development of practical skills is set out in the context of a more thorough discussion of these issues in P&R, 8.1.

The key thought is that a person learns, through instruction, practice and correction by others over time, that being thus₁ (confronted directly with a given fine-grained determination of the determinable F in experience), thus₂ (confronted with another), thus₃ (and another), and so on (for a sufficient range of cases), are all ways, or cases, of being F. Then she is in a position to know directly, on the basis of perception, that that (perceptually presented thing) is F. This is how it is now presented to her in experience, and she knows that she can, in normal circumstances, spot an F when she sees one, say. To put this account in a little more context, it is worth bringing out the three different categories of reasons which I think may be provided by a person's perceptual experiences for his empirical beliefs, or the three different types of perceptual knowledge which are available on my view.

First, there is the direct, purely perspectival, perceptual demonstrative knowledge with which I have been primarily concerned so far. This is expressed by judgements of the form 'That is thus', predicating massively fine-grained, essentially demonstratively identified, determinate properties of particular material objects in the perceiver's environment. The identification of such particulars, as the mind-independent things which they are, and of the mind-independent properties predicated of them, depend crucially upon the fact that the relevant, essentially experiential, demonstratives modes of presentation form part of a system of demonstrative thinking about the objects and properties in question, which constitutes her capacity to keep track of such things and to make sense of informative identities holding between them. This manifests her grasp of such perceptual demonstrative contents, as the joint upshot of how things objectively are and her being suitably placed, in suitable conditions, to appreciate that fact, and therefore also as her epistemic openness to the way things mind-independently are, given her point of view and other relevant circumstances of perception. It therefore provides her with a reason, which she recognizes as such, for endorsing the given content in belief. Thus, her reason for belief, in such cases, is provided simply by her entertaining, with proper understanding, the appropriate objective perceptual demonstrative content.

Second, there is direct, non-inferential, but linguistically articulated, categorial perceptual knowledge. This is the result of building upon the first type of empirical knowledge with a recognized skill for the appropriate non-demonstrative categorization of objects and properties. Here, the subject's reasons for her judgement, that that (perceptually presented thing) is F, say, are provided by her being in a position to entertain the perceptual demonstrative content 'That is thus' in the context of her knowledge that being thus is (a way of) being F. The content of her experience is simply 'That is F', which she normally, and knowledgeably, endorses in belief. Although there is therefore a dependence of such empirical knowledge upon that of the first, purely demonstrative, variety, this dependence should not be thought of inferentially. For the subject's belief that that thing is F is in this case not the product of her perceptual knowledge of some distinct, more basic, 'evidential' fact (or facts) that p, of whose obtaining she has independent knowledge that it is a reliable indicator that the thing in question is F. She simply recognizes, knowledgeably, there and then, that the way that particular thing is in the relevant respect, is F.

Third, and finally, there is genuinely inferential perceptual knowledge, in which the perceiver's reasons for belief essentially do have this composite form. She knows that q in this way, say, if she has direct perceptual knowledge that p, of one of the first two types, along with independent and independently acquired knowledge that the fact that p is a good indicator that q. I call this knowledge instrumental, since its paradigm instances are those in which a person uses the condition of some kind of instrument which she can perceive directly to inform her about otherwise epistemically inaccessible matters. A representative case would be that in which a person derives knowledge of the current running through an electric circuit from her perception of the reading on an ammeter along with her knowledge that that instrument is a reliable indicator of electrical current. This is a genuinely evidential dependence of knowledge that q (The current in that circuit is n amps) upon knowledge that p (The dial on that instrument reads 'n'), in the sense that the subject's grasp of the content 'q' is entirely independent of her knowledge, or otherwise, that the fact that p is a reliable indicator that q. In the second case above, on the other hand, the dependence of a person's

knowledge that that thing is F upon her knowledge that being thus is (a way of) being F is constitutive: her grasp of what it is to be F equips her simply to recognize that being thus a determination of the determinable F. So the subject's understanding of the content 'That is F' is not likewise entirely independent of any knowledge that being thus is (a way of) being F.

Having just been concerned with non-demonstrative, categorial elements of perceptual knowledge, I want to emphasize that a major message I hope to convey is that the key to understanding perceptual knowledge lies in exploring the interconnections between the philosophical logic and epistemology of perceptual demonstrative thought. Much recent work, both on the nature of empirical concepts and on empirical knowledge, has in my view suffered, both by ignoring the central importance of demonstratives, and by focusing, either upon epistemological issues to the exclusion of questions in philosophical logic (broadly construed), or vice versa. I hope to have given some illustration at least of the benefits to both areas of adopting a far more integrated approach, united by its focus upon the crucial level of perceptual demonstrative thought.

Reply to Fumerton

In his comments, Richard Fumerton carefully develops two fundamental concerns with my views, which he interprets sympathetically, and almost entirely correctly. Before turning to these concerns, though, I must make one point about his concise opening statement of my principal claims. As I hope is clear from my précis, perceptual experiences provide reasons for empirical beliefs not simply in virtue of sharing demonstrative content with them. The key idea is that a person cannot properly grasp the objective content of these experiences - that is, he cannot actually have experiences of particular things in the mind-independent world around him - without understanding that his apprehension that things are thus and so out there is in part due to the fact that they are. He therefore recognizes the relevant content as his epistemic openness to the way things objectively are. This is clearly central to my overall position.

Fumerton's first concern revolves around my contention that perceptual experiences have conceptual contents. This suggests an analogy with beliefs, which may have non-existent objects. Yet I insist that veridical perceptual experience at least is a real relation between the perceiver and a particular mind-independent object, which clearly cannot obtain in the absence of that very object. So how is the conceptual nature of perception to be understood? This does indeed introduce an analogy with belief in my view, although I also stress an important disanalogy: perceptual experience does not, whereas belief does, involve assent (P&R, 5.3.3). The impression that the analogy is in any way problematic, though, depends upon an equivocation in the claim that beliefs may have non-existent objects. It is surely an uncontroversial datum that there are beliefs which are 'about' non-existent things. The belief that there are ghosts, and Macbeth's belief that the thing in front of him is a dagger, are cases in point. I think that it is a mistake, though, to claim that every belief is quite independent of the existence of its object, in the sense that any belief about an existent object might equally have been held had that object not existed, or, indeed, had it not been appropriately related to the subject.

Perceptual demonstrative beliefs, for example, that is, beliefs about particular things in the subject's field of view, say, expressible, with suitable accompanying demonstration, by sentences of the form 'That F is G', are, I believe, existence-dependent: they are only available to a person who is appropriately related to the particular object in question, and they depend for their very existence upon the existence of that thing. There are, of course, closely related descriptive beliefs, which are not existence-dependent in this way, such as the belief that the F on my desk is G; but these have quite different contents, and are therefore distinct beliefs.¹²

The claim that beliefs may be true or false is similarly ambiguous. It is surely uncontroversial that some beliefs are true and some are false. It is a mistake, though, to claim that all beliefs are independent of their truth, or of the existence of the state of affairs which makes them true, in the sense that any true belief might equally have been held and yet have been false. Beliefs whose content is a necessary truth are an immediate counterexample. A person's belief which he expresses at any give time with the sentence 'I am here now' - or the Cartesian 'I exist' - is another, closer to my concerns here. My current belief that that thing is coloured thus (simultaneously indicating the computer in front of me and its specific characteristic shade of light grey) is the most relevant kind of case. This belief is simply unavailable to anyone who is not appropriately related to the particular computer in question and its colour, and it depends for its very existence upon that thing's being just that shade of grey. If it were a different shade, then the belief expressed by the sentence 'That thing is coloured thus' would be a different one. If there were no appropriate object on the right region of my desk, then no such demonstrative belief would be possible at all. Again, there are closely related descriptive beliefs, such as the belief that the computer on my desk is light grey in colour, which are not existence-dependent in this way; but these have quite different contents, and are therefore distinct beliefs.

¹²See Evans' (1982) discussion of what he calls 'Russellian' thoughts and singular terms; and McDowell, 1977, and esp. 1984, for seminal exposition and defence of these claims.

So, some beliefs are existence-dependent - dependent for their existence upon the existence, either of a particular mind-independent object, or of the very state of affairs which makes them true. It cannot therefore be any obstacle to construing the conceptual nature of perception by analogy with that of belief that perceptual experience is itself existence-dependent in precisely the same way. This analogy is perfectly secure, provided it is made with existence-dependent, rather than existence-independent, beliefs.¹³ Fumerton himself offers me a rather ingenious way of retaining some such analogy, by adopting the view that belief is “a structured state of affairs which is true when there is in reality a fact having precisely the same constituents but with the glue of exemplification substituting for the glue of belief” (p. *). I have some trouble understanding this view, and share his own reservations about it, and others besides. Thankfully, if my argument above is on the right lines, I have no need for such elaborate ontology.

Fumerton’s second concern takes off from the observation that Russell and I part company over the possible objects of direct perceptual acquaintance. Russell insists that these could not possibly be the elements of an external reality, whereas I contend that they are: precisely the persisting, spatially located objects and their properties which make up the mind-independent world around us; and Fumerton wonders what my response is supposed to be to the argument from the possibility of hallucination (APH) in support of Russell’s view here.¹⁴

He is absolutely right that I reject its first premise. When having a vivid hallucinatory experience, a person does not have the same reasons for empirical belief as she does when she is actually perceiving the way things are in the world around her. For, in the veridical case, her epistemic openness to the way things are out there is evident to her,

¹³See Martin* for the attractive suggestion that this form of existence-dependence is precisely what experiential episodic memory has in common with perception, as against imagination, which may rather be assimilated to existence-independent, descriptive belief.

¹⁴See p. * for his version of (APH).

whereas, in the hallucinatory case, she merely seems to be open to the way the world is. Fumerton asks how there could possibly be such a significant difference between the two cases when the subject cannot tell the difference between them. The notion of her being able to tell the difference, though, is ambiguous. In one sense she cannot tell the difference, but this only entails that there is no epistemically significant difference in her subjective condition given a controversial assumption which I reject. In another, more relevant, sense she simply can tell the difference. On the first reading, she can tell the difference iff veridical experience enables her indubitably to rule out the possibility of hallucination. But there is always room for doubt here, since perception is manifestly not infallible. So she cannot tell the difference in this sense. It only follows that veridical perception and hallucination are identical in what is made subjectively evident, and so in the reasons for belief which they provide, though, if it is assumed that two experiential conditions are subjectively identical whenever being in one of them does not silence every possible doubt that one might be in the other. Equivalently, it must be assumed that what is subjectively evident, is all and only what the subject is infallible about. This assumption certainly has a history; but I reject it explicitly throughout the book.¹⁵ On a second reading, a person can tell the difference between perception and hallucination iff perceiving that *p* puts her in a position to know that her experience that *p* is not a hallucination, rather than being able to rule this out without any possible doubt. In this sense, she can tell the difference. For, as I explain, perceiving that *p* provides an epistemic openness to the fact that *p*, and hence knowledge that *p*: it is a way of coming to know that *p*. She also knows that it experientially seems to her that *p*. She may therefore knowledgeably deduce that her experience is not hallucinatory. So we, as theorists, have an adequate defence of the subjective evidential difference between the two conditions.¹⁶

Notice that the direction of argument here is as follows. It is the case that *p*; it seems to me that *p*; hence my experience is veridical. Fumerton's discussion of acquaintance with

¹⁵See Williamson, 2000, for extended argument against this traditional assumption.

¹⁶See P&R, 7.3, for further development of these ideas.

experiential states suggests that he thinks that the argument must go in the opposite direction: it seems to me that p ; my experience is veridical, therefore p . This is already to have made Russell's restriction upon the objects of acquaintance. The most basic objects of knowledge are mind-dependent experiences, whose nature is quite independent of the way things are in the mind-independent world, and can be known prior to any knowledge about how things are out there. I agree that the only non-sceptical options then are the kind of epistemic externalism which Fumerton mentions and some kind of idealism or phenomenalism. He is absolutely right that I reject both. My view is a more radical type of externalism: a person's subjective-experiential condition in perception is itself constituted by her relations with the mind-independent things in the world around her, and is therefore a source of direct, noninferential knowledge about them.¹⁷

In any case, (APH) fails to establish Russell's exclusion of features of external reality as possible objects of acquaintance. So my thesis that perception provides direct epistemic access to mind-independent things themselves is in the clear.

¹⁷Fumerton is right that I say little about the nature of hallucinatory or illusory experience. My view is that this can only be characterized as a failed attempt at world-involving veridical perception, and specified by the descriptive identification of its purported objects.

Reply to Hurley

Susan Hurley's principal objection to my position can be put like this. I claim that reasons require conceptual contents. If only I had broadened my focus out in two ways, though, (a) from a narrow epistemological concern with the reasons which perceptual experiences provide for empirical beliefs, to include a serious discussion of reasons for action, and (b) away from the development of strictly a priori arguments, by paying serious attention to empirical work on limited rationality in humans and other animals, then I would have seen that there are many instances of reasons, which are genuinely reasons for the subject, or from the subject's point of view, but which do not engage fully conceptual capacities.

Put this way, I could make two soft replies right away. First, I could simply grant the existence of reasons for action, which are the subject's reasons for doing what she does, yet which do not require conceptual contents. I could then revise my central claim in the area, insisting only that reasons - for the subject - for belief require conceptual contents. This would, as Hurley notes, be an explicit weakening of my view; but it would capture all that is essential to my central project in the book. Second, I could attempt to represent our disagreement as purely verbal, by bringing out those respects in which Hurley's criteria for fully conceptual capacities are significantly stronger than my own. In that way, her non-conceptual reasons for action may turn out to be perfectly conceptual by my lights. Although there is some substance to each of these moves, they fail to do full justice to the depth and direction of Hurley's comments, and fall well short of my considered response to them. I shall say a little in elaboration of these two cheap shots, though, and make a further small point of clarification, before engaging seriously with what I take to be the main line of Hurley's objection.

First, the distinction between reasons for belief and reasons for action is relevant to my Basic Argument for the thesis that reasons require conceptual contents. For, as Hurley rightly points out, that argument proceeds in two stages as follows. (1) Reasons have their

status as such in virtue of the validity of certain backing inferences. (2) If these are to be the subject's reasons, then the relevant premises of such backing inferences must actually be the contents of the mental states providing such reasons, which are therefore, by my definition (P&R, p. 149; and p. 8* above), conceptual contents. So reasons require conceptual contents. Now, in the case of reasons for belief, the conclusion of the backing inference in question just is the content of the belief for which the subject's reasons are being given. At the very least, a different account will have to be given of the conclusion of the backing inference in the case of reasons for action, since actions themselves are not the conclusions of any valid inference. Perhaps the modification here is straightforward, but the absence of a perfect parallel is surely undeniable.

Second, Hurley moves at various points, from the fact that an agent's capacities are 'context-bound' in some way, lacking complete context-independent generality, or 'decompositional structure', to the conclusion that these are therefore not conceptual capacities. The inference is, in my view, or should I say on my definition of the conceptual, invalid. For, as I admit quite explicitly throughout, demonstrative capacities are context-bound, in the sense that their exercise depends upon actually standing, or having stood, in certain perceptual attentional relations with the relevant worldly objects. Yet these are conceptual capacities, since they figure in the contents of judgements serving as the premises or conclusions of inferences of various kinds. Indeed these are precisely the conceptual capacities which are my central concern throughout. Furthermore, as Hurley herself explicitly notes in the light of discussion with Ram Neta (p. * above), it cannot possibly be a necessary condition upon the possession of conceptual capacities that these are rationally invoked in every appropriate context. Conceptual activity is perfectly consistent with merely bounded, imperfect and context-bound rationality.

A third preliminary point is that Hurley exaggerates my neglect for the importance of agency, perhaps due to a misinterpretation of one of my central claims. The claim is poorly formulated, and her interpretation not unreasonable; but it is absolutely not what I

intend. As she says, I argue that “beliefs about spatial particulars have their contents only in virtue of their relations with perceptual experiences” (p. 46). Hurley takes this to mean that their relations with perceptual experiences are on their own sufficient, without any mention of intention or action, for a complete account of how empirical beliefs have the contents which they do. She goes on to criticize this claim by insisting that their relations with intention and action are in fact equally important in this regard. I have some sympathy with the idea that the contents of empirical beliefs, and, indeed, the contents of perceptual experiences themselves, are in part dependent upon their relations with the subject’s intentions and actions.¹⁸ I certainly did not mean to rule this out in any way. My claim is rather that their relations with perceptual experiences are necessary for certain empirical beliefs’ possession of the contents which they have. So the importance of agency is not in conflict with my views. It is just not my primary focus.¹⁹

All this having been said, Hurley’s discussion still develops a powerful and interesting line of objection to my claim that reasons require conceptual contents. Her leading idea is that a suitably rich set of holistic interrelations between perceptions, motor intentions and actions yields a subjective point of view upon the world, with respect to which the notion of acting for a reason, which is the subject’s reason, has genuine application. Yet this may not involve the reflection, context-freedom and inferential promiscuity required for possession of fully conceptual capacities. She goes on to illustrate the point with some examples of context-bound islands of practical rationality in humans and non-human primates.

I have an initial uncertainty about how to interpret this suggestion. For I am unsure how to understand Hurley’s appeal to perceptions and, in particular, to motor intentions.

¹⁸See Brewer, 1992, and 1993.

¹⁹Having acknowledged the possibility of a crucial role for intention and action here, I should also point a respect in which perception seems to me to be fundamental. For possession of anything deserving the title ‘intention’ requires the agent’s understanding of his intended goal, his knowledge of which object is the target of his intention, for example; and this in turn requires - at least in the most basic cases which Hurley mentions, such as ball catching, food cutting and instrument manipulation - perception of the relevant worldly objects. (See also my worries below about Hurley’s use of the notion of a motor intention.)

Activity in the motor cortex encodes various relatively robust motor programmes which, once laid down, may be triggered and executed without monitoring or any feedback control. These programmes may be purely subpersonal, though, and make no impact whatsoever upon the organism's conscious point of view. On the other hand, we have full blown personal level intentions, as I may intend now to finish this reply by the end of the day. But these are explicitly conceptual. Hurley must intend something intermediate between the two, though I am not myself clear about exactly how she conceives of it.

My major worry about her proposal is independent of these details, though. The basic idea is that a complex structure of dispositions, to action given certain perceptions and intentions, to perception given certain intentions and actions, and to intention given certain actions and perceptions, constitutes possession of a point of view, which makes reasons for action accessible to the subject, making them genuinely his reasons for doing what he does. Possession of a specific such set of dispositions is, on this account, what makes it the case that things are thus and so from the point of view in question. Given that, I agree that we may be able to make sense of the idea that the way things are from that point of view provides a reason, in some sense, for acting in such and such a way, and this may in turn, and non-accidentally, be just what the subject goes on to do. I still resist the claim, though, that the way things are from the point of view in question provides the subject's reason for doing so, in the sense which concerns me, the sense which I argue is required for the essential content-determining role of perceptual experiences in relation to empirical beliefs. For acting for a reason is, on this account, no more than acting in the context of a complex set of dispositions to mainly appropriate action in suitably related circumstances. We therefore have no motivation yet for moving beyond the subject's merely acting in accord with what the circumstances make it reasonable to do, to acting for the reason which those circumstances give the subject for doing so. The latter requires the presence of a single psychological condition which grounds and unifies the subject's appropriate dispositions in the actual and suitably related alternative circumstances, by presenting them as reasonable to her, rather than the brute existence of the relevant dispositions.

The point comes out more clearly in the context of my Basic Argument. My starting point is the idea that a person's reasons for believing or doing what she does must be recognizable by her as such. Now, their status as reasons rests upon the validity of some appropriate backing inference, whose conclusion is suitably related to the belief or action in question.²⁰ Such an inference is valid only in virtue of the relations in conceptual structure between its premises and conclusion. If the reason-giving state concerned is a mental state whose content is the - necessarily conceptual - content of a premise of this inference, then the subject's being in that state requires her grasp of that very content in precisely the way which is articulated explicitly by its conceptual structure. Thus, we have an account of what her recognition of her reason as such consists in: her appreciation in the understanding essential to her being in that very mental state of the conceptual structure in virtue of which the inference which underwrites its reason-giving status is valid. The challenge which the Basic Argument sets, in the case of purportedly non-conceptual reason-giving states, is to provide an alternative to this account of how the recognition requirement is met. I see nothing in Hurley's proposal which even attempts to take on this challenge. So I deny that she has shown the possibility of reasons for the subject in the absence of - perhaps context-bound and imperfectly exercised - conceptual capacities.

²⁰Note that if we are concerned here with a creature entirely devoid of conceptual capacities, then it is far from clear what this relation could possibly be thought to be, between the necessarily conceptual conclusion of the relevant backing inference and the behaviour for which reasons are supposedly being given. For such a creature is bound to lack any representation of its behaviour which relates directly to any such conceptual conclusion. So the idea that it may nevertheless have reasons which it recognizes as such for this behaviour is already under pressure.

Reply to Eilan

This challenge leads directly into the issues raised by Naomi Eilan. She begins by setting the scene perfectly for my concerns. My central idea is that conscious perceptual experiences are essential to a person's understanding of the most basic, demonstrative thoughts about particular mind-independent objects, in a way which illuminates how it is that these experiences constitute a source of direct, non-inferential knowledge about such things. Her principal concern is whether my insistence that the epistemological role of perceptual experiences requires them to have conceptual contents is compatible with the intuitively explanatory role of such experiences in connection with the possibility of demonstrative thought.

In line with our shared articulation of the central idea as a limited vindication of Russell, let us call a person's conscious perception of an object her acquaintance with that thing. The tension can then be brought out like this. My thesis that reasons require conceptual contents entails that there is an essential appeal to demonstrative thought in explicating what acquaintance is. Yet acquaintance plays a genuinely explanatory role in connection with the possibility of demonstrative thought only if it may be explicated entirely without appeal to such thought. Eilan admits that a limited form of 'explanation' is available on the conceptualist view of acquaintance. For, on that view, conscious acquaintance with some object, o, just is entertaining some perceptual demonstrative mode of presentation of o in thought; and, if my Strawson Argument is correct, then this way of thinking of o is essentially experiential. So no wonder a person incapable of experiential acquaintance is incapable of demonstrative thought. But her claim is that this is intuitively insufficiently illuminating. Nor do we simply have a stand-off here. For she suggests two ways of developing a non-conceptualist alternative, which offer the prospects at least of providing a more substantive explanation of the dependence of demonstrative thought upon acquaintance, whilst also capturing the role of acquaintance as a source of non-inferential knowledge about the world.

The starting point in each case is the idea that the mechanism of acquaintance is attention. So far, though, this is simply a switch in terminology. The challenge now is to make room for an account of attention which is, both sufficiently primitive, relative to conceptual demonstrative thought, to yield a genuine explanation of the possibility of such thought, and also sufficiently demanding, cognitively speaking, to constitute a plausible source of reasons, for the subject, to endorse demonstrative contents in belief. At this point, Eilan distinguishes the following two claims. First, if conscious perceptual attention is to provide a cognitive relation between a person and the constituents of the world around her - a relation, that is, capable of yielding knowledge about that world - then attention must have some kind of a priori link with reasoning abilities which the subject herself actually has available in making sense of the world presented to her. Second, if attention is to provide such a cognitive relation, then it must be linked directly to the subject's capacity for deductive and other propositional reasoning. My account of the reason-giving role of perceptual experiences commits me to the second, stronger claim. This is at the heart of my Basic Argument for the thesis that reasons require conceptual contents.

Her more radical alternative rejects both claims: attention need not be linked a priori with any reasoning abilities of the subject's at all. (It may be elucidated in terms of subpersonal binding, or as the brute causal ground of a person's inclination to reason in various ways, but that is another matter.) Without a good deal more argument and elucidation, though, I cannot regard this as anything other than a direct refusal to engage with the challenge posed by my Basic Argument to the non-conceptualist, to meet the recognition requirement upon the genuine reasons, for the subject, which my Switching Argument aims to establish that perceptual experiences must provide for determinate beliefs about particular mind-independent things.²¹

²¹See P&R, 5.2, esp. pp. 163-9, pp. 6-9* above and what follows, for more on this recognition requirement.

Eilan's more moderate alternative accepts the first claim above, and rejects the second. This strikes me as far more pressing. For the a priori link between attention and some kind of reasoning by the subject looks at least poised to meet the epistemic condition that experiences should provide reasons, recognizable as such by the subject, for empirical beliefs; and the distinction between this link and any direct connection with fully propositional reasoning opens the way for a genuine explanation of the dependence of conceptual thought upon possession of conscious perceptual attention to the worldly objects in question. The outcome here depends crucially upon the nature of the a priori link with the subject's reasoning, in terms of which such attention is to be characterized. Eilan distinguishes two possible strategies. First, attention may be explained, exhaustively, in terms of the subject's actual, but non-conceptual, reasoning abilities. She illustrates this idea by appeal to 'imagistic reasoning': the reasoning employed by a person who rotates a mental image, say, to discover whether a table which he is looking at will fit into an empty space in the corner of the room. Call this the imagistic view. Second, attention may be characterized as the a priori explanatory ground of whatever dispositions the subject may have to reason in any way, either conceptually or non-conceptually. Call this the ground view. These are both extremely interesting suggestions, which deserve extended consideration. Neither is altogether unattractive to me either. For, although they are both inconsistent with an explicit thesis of the book, they would each, if correct, preserve what I take to be most important in my overall project: that perceptual experiences must provide reasons, in a relatively demanding sense, for empirical beliefs, and that the way in which they make mind-independent objects themselves directly available to the subject in thought enables them to meet this condition through its a priori link with her own reasoning abilities. Still, I do have some worries.

To begin with, if the appeal to attention really is to provide a substantive explanation, of the kind which Eilan seeks and the conceptualist cannot give, of the dependence of demonstrative thought upon conscious experience, then attention must evidently be more basic than, and characterizable without reference to, propositional reasoning of any kind. I

think that this may be a relatively minor worry in both cases. For the actual reasoning, in terms of which attentional contact with the world is to be elucidated on the imagistic view, is the kind of image manipulation which is involved in furniture rearrangement, and other similarly practically oriented tasks; and this is intuitively closely related at least to the reasoning which animals exploit in negotiating their environment without the exercise of concepts in full blown judgement. Similarly, the explanatory ground of a subject's dispositions to various forms of reasoning may plausibly be held on the ground view to be something which issues only in extremely rudimentary reasoning in certain circumstances, although it equally gives rise to fully conceptual reasoning in more sophisticated settings. Of course, these central notions, of imagistic reasoning and of the a priori explanatory ground of reasoning dispositions, need far more detailed and extensive characterization; but I cannot see any obvious reason why either should be thought to require essential reference to the propositional reasoning characteristic of conceptual thought.

I do wonder, though, whether this very fact, of the relative primitiveness of these two central notions in comparison with conceptual thought, might in the end put pressure on the claim that a conception of conscious attention which is to be elucidated purely in terms of either of them could possibly account for the epistemological role of perceptual experiences in relation to empirical beliefs.

Against the imagistic view, it is surely one thing for a creature's behaviour to be guided systematically by its manipulation of images, it is quite another for a person's experiences to provide her with reasons, which are recognizable as such by her, for beliefs about the mind-independent world around her. How could an image, conceived simply as the type of item which is manipulated in this kind of procedure, possibly provide a reason of this demanding form for any belief. Suppose that I have a picture in front of me of the Eiffel Tower standing next to Blackpool Tower. Regardless of how I may have acquired this picture, it is clearly not sufficient on its own for me to have any reason whatsoever to believe that the Eiffel Tower is taller than Blackpool Tower. Leaving aside for present purposes my

evident need for some additional reason to believe that the picture represents their relative heights (roughly) accurately, I must appreciate that what is being represented is the relative heights of those two towers: that the Eiffel Tower is taller than Blackpool Tower. I have to pick out their relative heights as such in this way, rather than ignoring this aspect of the picture and concentrating instead on the represented similarities of their construction, say, or the more extensive rust damage on one than the other. It is this conceptual content, then, which provides my reason for belief: the picture taken (conceptually) in a certain way. Equally, in my view, if a person's perceptual relations with the actual things in the world around him are to provide reasons, which are recognizable as such by him, for his beliefs about the world, then these must be conceived, in the first instance, in terms of his entertaining conceptual demonstrative contents, which display the specific facts about how things are out there which he goes on to endorse in belief.

Similarly, against the ground view, I would say this. If attention is identified with the ground of a person's reasoning dispositions, which is itself to be characterized entirely without reference to her actual propositional reasoning, then the mere existence of an a priori link between this ground and any dispositions which she may have to go in for such reasoning - a link which may be discernible only by the theorist, after long hard reflection - is surely insufficient for attention to the world to meet the recognition requirement upon the reasons which a person's perceptual experiences must provide for her most basic beliefs about how things are out there. For the appropriateness of this grounding relation may be completely invisible to her.²²

²²Although it introduces a number of controversial further complexities, the following analogy may be useful here. A person's belief that p may be the ground of her disposition to believe that q, in a case in which q logically follows from p, and hence in which there is an a priori link between ground and disposition; and yet her actually arriving at the belief that q may still be quite unreasonable for her. For she may have no recognition whatsoever of the appropriateness of the transition - perhaps q is complex, and its derivation intellectually too demanding. Of course, any attempt to construe the required recognition of the appropriateness of the transition from p to q as a further, independent belief, that (p → q), notoriously leads to regress (Carroll, 1895). This is analogous to the way in which the second-order accounts of (R) which are offered by classical foundationalism and classical coherentism are equally unsuccessful. It simply shows that the recognition requirement must be met in the case of a priori knowledge too by a more direct, first-order account. The point remains, though, that an a priori link between ground and disposition is not sufficient on its own for the transition between them to be reasonable from the subject's point of view.

If these worries are on the right lines, then the kind of constitutive ‘explanation’ which is granted to the conceptualist above is all that we can expect, by way of illumination of the dependence of conceptual demonstrative thought upon conscious perceptual experience. Any more authentically Russellian account of attentional acquaintance with the world will not do. In Eilan’s terms, object-dependent demonstrative senses are the only possible vehicle for a satisfactory account of perceptual acquaintance as that relation between a person and the things in the world around her, which makes available the contents of her most basic thoughts about such things, and, in doing so, provides her with non-inferential reasons for the endorsement of such contents in belief.

Reply to Martin

Mike Martin raises a series of powerful and related objections to what he rightly regards as a central feature of my position. I claim that the reason-giving role of perceptual experiences is a product purely of their content. He argues that this is incompatible, both with an adequate account of categorial knowledge in perception, and with any satisfactory story about the defeasibility of perceptual reasons.

The first set of worries can be put in the form of a dilemma. Either the content of perceptual experience may be entertained non-perceptually - in imagination, hypothesis, negation or comparison of some kind - or it may not. If it may, then this content alone cannot be what provides the subject with her reason for belief in the normal perceptual case. If it may not, then there will be no room, either for non-inferential categorial knowledge in perception, or for the direct perception of difference, between the colours of two seen objects, say. Martin considers two kinds of case in which it seems as though the very content which I claim is reason-giving in normal perception may be entertained non-perceptually, in such a way as to provide no reason whatsoever for the subject to endorse that content in belief. This possibility clearly puts pressure on the view that the content in question could ever really be reason-giving in its own right. His cases are these. First, I glimpse an object through a haze, and entertain the demonstrative hypothesis that that (perceptually presented thing) is a cube. Second, standing in front of two differently coloured balls, I entertain the content, which I know to be false, say, that that ball (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball B). I agree that we must be able to make sense of such cases, if there is to be categorial perceptual knowledge and perception of difference. I shall try to show, though, that relevant distinctions can be made between these and their nearest neighbour cases of direct perceptual knowledge, which are compatible with my account of the reason-giving role of experience.

Perception is indeed, in my view, a source of non-inferential categorial knowledge.²³ Such knowledge always retains some dependence, though, upon the most basic case of perceptual demonstrative knowledge. For a person's reasons for believing that that (perceptually presented thing) is a cube, say, on any given occasion, are provided by his being in a position to entertain the demonstrative content 'That is shaped thus' in the context of his knowledge that being shaped thus is (a way of) being a cube (see esp. P&R, pp. 249-50). In Martin's first case, there is obviously no such contextual knowledge. For the thing in question is not a cube. Even if it were, the haze is introduced precisely to prevent the subject's recognitional capacity for cubes issuing, on this occasion, in the knowledge that being thus is (a way of) being a cube.

Consider the analogy which I exploit in developing my account of categorial knowledge in perception. A person's capacity intentionally to serve an outswinger in tennis, just like that (without having intentionally to (serve an outswinger by ψ -ing), for any relevant ' ψ '), is in no way threatened by the existence of abnormal contexts, such as her complete exhaustion, or the availability only of a racket twice the normal weight, in which her skill breaks down. In normal contexts she simply, and intentionally, serves an outswinger, just like that. Of course this depends upon her knowledge that doing that (demonstrating precisely what she does on the occasion in question) is a way of serving an outswinger. But still her success on this occasion is in no way instrumental or indirect. She does intentionally serve an outswinger, and does so without having intentionally to (serve an outswinger by ψ -ing), for any relevant ' ψ '. Similarly, her perceptual knowledge, on any normal occasion, that that is a cube, is not undermined by the existence of circumstances, such as a thick haze, in which she cannot tell whether something of which she catches sight in the distance is a cube or not. Martin suggests that the dependence which I am exploiting here, of such categorial knowledge upon the subject's knowledge that being shaped thus is (a way of) being a cube, makes all categorial knowledge unacceptably inferential on my account. First, the dependence cannot be unacceptable. For it is surely a datum that a person

²³See P&R 8.1, and pp. 11-14* above for further discussion of this issue.

cannot possibly know that a given thing is a cube unless she knows that being shaped as it is is what we call 'being a cube', that is, unless she knows that being shaped thus is (one way of) being a cube. Second, the knowledge is not inferential, by my definition. For it is not the product of the subject's perceptual knowledge of some more basic 'evidential' fact (or facts), such as that the thing in question is white with black dots, whose obtaining she has independent knowledge is a reliable indicator that the thing in question is a cube. The dependence which I insist upon here is constitutive rather than evidential in this way.

Martin arrives at the demonstrative case which he regards as threatening - his second case above - in two stages. First, the subject may well be in a position to judge that that (ball A) is not coloured thus (the shade of ball B). Second, by compositionality, she is therefore equally in position, either mistakenly to judge, or simply to entertain, perhaps even with knowledge of its falsity, the content that that (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball B). She has no reason whatsoever to believe this content. So simply entertaining the content 'That (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball A)' likewise gives her no good reason for endorsing that content in belief. There are two ways in which she may come to entertain the former, mistaken content, each of which differs significantly from the normal perceptual entertaining of the correct content. First, she may be unaware of her shift in attention, from ball A to (the colour of) ball B. In that case, it is far from clear to me that she has kept track of one rather than the other ball, and the other rather than the one colour, as it were, sufficiently to ascribe to her just that determinate content, rather than any of the other three possible combinations. Second, she may be aware of her shift in attention between the two balls. In that case, she will be aware of her entertaining each of the contents 'That (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball A)' and 'That (ball B) is coloured thus (the shade of ball B)' as her epistemic openness to the facts; and she will be equally aware of the content 'That (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball B)' as a composite constructed by her, as it were, rather than derived directly from the world. So this is absolutely not a case of evident epistemic openness in my sense. Thus, although her purportedly, or actually, entertaining the mistaken content 'That (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball B)' gives

her no reason to endorse anything in belief, each of the ways in which this may come about differs sufficiently from her normal perceptual entertaining of the correct content 'That (ball A) is coloured thus (the shade of ball A) to leave this intact as a perfectly good reason for her to endorse that content in belief.

Martin goes on to develop a related objection in connection with the defeasibility of perceptual warrant. Here the difficulty seems to me less pressing. Indeed, I would myself propose an account of defeasibility quite close to the "far simpler response" which he sketches towards the end of his comments (p. *). In the case which he gives of a person knowingly subjected to an hallucination-producing machine, which is, unbeknownst to her, faulty, he claims that her perceptual warrant is defeated by the collateral information that she is in such a machine, even though the content of her experience is 'That is an orange', say, precisely as it would be in a normal case of perception. His worry then is that the only way in which I can capture this phenomenon is by an untenable rejection of the intuition that people are in a position to tell which contents they are entertaining simply through entertaining them. For the only way of undermining the reason-giving force of experience, in this case, appears to be by claiming that the subject's knowledge of the machine undermines her knowledge of the content of her experience. This is absolutely not how it works in my view.

As things are, the subject's experience has the demonstrative content 'That is an orange'. She also seems to have reason to doubt that there is an orange, or anything else, just there in front of her, because she does not know that what she knows is a hallucination-producing machine is faulty. I claim that her experience provides her with a perfectly good reason to believe that that (perceptually presented thing) is indeed an orange, as in any like case of veridical perception. Her collateral information (in this case a strange brand of misinformation) may well incline her to withhold any endorsement of this content in belief. In that case, of course, she does not know that that is an orange; and that is the sense in which her reason is 'defeated'. Similarly, she is in a perfectly good position to know the

content of her experience, by the very means which she employs in any normal case of perception. Once again, though, given knowledge that entertaining that content depends upon the way the world is, about which she wrongly believes she has grounds for uncertainty, she may refrain from judging that she is entertaining the content 'That is an orange'.

Thus, I would characterize the 'defeat' in these cases as follows. A person has perfectly good reason to believe that that (perceptually presented thing) is an orange. She wrongly believes that she may well be subject to an hallucination. This undermines her confidence sufficiently to interrupt her normal inclination to this belief. So she fails to know that that is an orange. I think that this is a perfectly adequate account of the phenomenon. It is consistent with my overall position; and it does not have any unacceptable implications concerning first person authority.²⁴

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