

***Knowing and Seeing. Groundwork for a new empiricism***, by Michael Ayers. (ch. 1 co-authored with Maria Rosa Antognazza.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp ix + 211

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Perceptual knowledge and self-knowledge tend to be treated, in contemporary epistemology, as separate topics. On the one hand, there are questions regarding the nature of perceptual experience, and the explanatory connection between perception and knowledge. On the other hand, there are questions as to how to understand our ability (such as it is) to be aware of our own current lives, including our mental lives, perhaps in some sense ‘from within’. It is not normally assumed that there is much overlap between the two sets of issues. If the central thesis of Michael Ayers’s absorbing new book is correct, this way of thinking about the two topics is deeply misguided. It prevents us from acknowledging, let alone understanding, the most interesting and puzzling feature of experientially grounded knowledge. By attending to objects presented in perceptual experience, we not only come to know what objects are like, but we do so in a way that simultaneously makes it manifest to us that and how we know what they are like. Perceptual knowledge is, as Ayers puts it, ‘perspicuous’. No account of it can be fully adequate if it sheds no light on the sense in which such knowledge involves self-consciousness.

Ayers is well known and widely admired for his magisterial two-volume study of Locke’s philosophy. One might assume that, since Ayers is a renowned scholar of Locke and since *Knowing and Seeing*, as the subtitle informs us, aims to lay the ‘groundwork for a new empiricism’, the book must be an attempt to revive the tradition of ‘British empiricism’. If this is what you expect, you will quickly be disappointed (or relieved). For one thing, Ayers takes a much more liberal view of the sorts of things that can be ‘directly’ perceived than ‘British empiricists’ typically do. He maintains that we can immediately perceive physical objects and even causal relations among physical objects — indeed even the causal interaction involved in perception itself (more on this below). The roots of Ayers’s ‘new empiricism’ are less insular. They lie in the ‘ancient doctrine of the independent authority of the senses’.

(1991: 153) That doctrine was one strand in what Ayers calls ‘European theory of knowledge from Plato to Locke’ or simply ‘traditional epistemology’ (Ayers 2019, p. 3 — henceforth, page references are to Ayers 2019 unless otherwise specified) — that is to say, epistemology *predating* the various traditions that inform most current work. Not many contemporary epistemologists think they have much to learn from Plato, Epicurus or Lucretius. That, as Ayers and Maria Rosa Antognazza (the co-author of chapter 1, ‘Knowledge and belief from Plato to Locke’) argue, is contemporary epistemology’s loss. A particularly attractive feature of the book, to my mind, is the way it brings out how much is to be gained from doing epistemology in the light of its less recent history. If it’s a mark of a ‘humanistic discipline’ that reflection on its own history is (or should be) an integral part of the enterprise (Williams 2000), Antognazza and Ayers make a compelling case for treating epistemology as a humanistic discipline.

Ayers’s debt to ‘traditional epistemology’ is particularly to the fore in his discussion of the nature of knowledge, and the ‘perspicuity’ of certain kinds of knowledge, in chs. 1 and 2. He further develops this theme in the penultimate chapter, where he offers a striking diagnosis of the ‘illusory force’ of arguments for Cartesian scepticism. There is a second theme, however, that runs through Ayers’s discussion of perception and perceptual knowledge: his vigorous opposition to a view he calls ‘conceptualism’ and sometimes labels ‘neo-Kantian’. (Here, perhaps, we can after all find some traces of ‘British empiricism’.) The combination of the two themes is what makes Ayers’ account utterly distinctive and is perhaps responsible for some of its notable attractions. But, as I will argue below, it also raises some puzzling questions. I think there is a palpable tension between some of the commitments of Ayers’s ‘new empiricism’, and it is not obvious how Ayers thinks the tension is to be resolved. I start by looking in more detail at the ‘perspicuity’ thesis and its background.

### **1. Perspicuity and primary knowledge**

Chapter 1 has two main aims. One is to debunk the myth that the tripartite analysis or definition of knowledge as justified true belief goes back to Plato. (Antognazza

and Ayers acknowledge that the myth is 'well on the way out' but reckon it needs 'a kick or two to send it finally through the door.' (p. 5)) The second aim is to identify what they see as crucial insight contained in Plato's real view of the nature of knowledge. The insight is part of a 'package' they think informed both rationalist and empiricist thinking from Plato to Locke. While the package may not be 'acceptable as a whole' (p. 25), it is possible to separate the Platonic 'insight' from the unpalatable rest of the package.

On the traditional view, as Antognazza and Ayers understand it, knowledge is not a species of belief. Rather, knowledge and belief are different (and mutually irreducible) species of a genus Aquinas characterized as 'thinking with assent' (p. 24). Knowledge has two defining features. First, it involves a kind of 'direct cognitive contact' with reality. Second, that 'contact' affords not only 'first-order' knowledge but also, simultaneously, a certain kind of self-knowledge, viz. knowledge of how one knows what one knows. For S to know that p is for the fact that p to be 'evident' to S, where 'evidence' (in this sense) implies both 'cognitive contact' and 'perspicuity'.

The obvious problem with the traditional view may seem to be that it imposes an implausible restriction on the scope of knowledge. The idea of testimonial knowledge, for example, would fall at the first hurdle. Now Ayers's project is not to contrive a definition that 'fits each and every case of what is normally counted knowledge' (p. 27). Still, he does seem to regard the traditional view as excessively strict. So he suggests that we need to make a distinction. We should recognize two kinds of knowledge. 'Primary knowledge' implies that a fact is 'evident' to the subject, in the traditional view's sense. Conditions for 'secondary knowledge' are less exacting. Such knowledge is available even when we have no 'direct cognitive contact' with the object of our knowledge (e.g. when we know something through inference to the best explanation), and even in cases where, furthermore, we are not even aware of how we know what we know (e.g. when we remember some fact without recalling how we first discovered it). (See pp. 65-8.)

The point of the distinction, evidently, is to enable us to retain the sweets of the traditional view without the bitters of radically shrinking the scope of knowledge. But what sweets does the traditional view have to offer? Although I doubt he'd appreciate the label, I think Ayers is in effect proposing a transcendental argument here. He argues that while not all knowledge is primary knowledge, possession of *some* primary knowledge is a necessary condition for having *any* knowledge. Compare: while games can be played for all kinds of reasons, the 'quintessential, paradigm, conceptually central instances' of games are those played for 'sheer pleasure'. Likewise, Ayers contends, the quintessential, conceptually central instances of knowing are cases in which we are 'perspicuously conscious of the object of knowledge.' (p. 27) One way to see this is to recognize that perspicuous perceptual consciousness of objects around us is a necessary condition for one's 'judgements even to be about the world or, indeed, to have any content at all.' (p. 28)

Antognazza and Ayers's exposition of the transcendental argument is quite compact and I think would have deserved further elaboration, in view of some possible misgivings. For example, it is natural to wonder why primary knowledge must exhibit not only 'contact' but also 'perspicuity'. One might grant that the former is a necessary condition for judgements having content, but question whether the required consciousness of objects has to be *self-conscious*. As a matter of fact, I think Ayers has a good response to this. In a later chapter he points out that 'I saw that the car was green' provides a basic way to establish the credentials of the assertion or judgement 'The car was green', possibly in response to 'How do you know it was green?' (pp. 78-8) This may provide an opening for expanding on the transcendental argument. Roughly speaking: without 'direct cognitive contact' our judgements would be empty; without perspicuity, they would be unjustified. I shall come back to the question whether the expanded version of the argument would be acceptable to Ayers. More immediately, I want to consider how, according to Ayers's new empiricism, our capacity for perspicuous perceptual knowledge is to be understood.

## **2. Empiricism and anti-conceptualism**

A good starting point is the distinction between empiricism and rationalism. An empiricist in Ayers's sense is someone who thinks perceptual experience provides us with knowledge of mind-independent objects and who resists any kind of 'rationalist' explanation or reduction of the knowledge-generating role of the senses. Understanding that role, empiricists insist, requires understanding the 'primitive and underived authority' of the senses as a source of knowledge. (Ayers 1991: 153) Importantly, to resist a rationalist analysis is not just to reject Descartes's demand that the attitude most immediately delivered by the senses ('natural belief') needs to be validated by epistemological theorizing if it is to be turned into knowledge. It is also to repudiate the currently more popular view that we acquire perceptual knowledge by forming beliefs for reasons afforded by perception. Now, a traditional response to this latter view ('traditional' in the parochial sense of a line of thinking that has been around for about fifty years) is to argue that the view 'over-intellectualizes' things: we acquire perceptual beliefs, it is claimed, not by being responsive to reasons but through the less cerebral operation of what is sometimes called a 'belief-forming mechanism'. I think that from Ayers's point of view, this reaction *concedes too much* to the rationalist. The response is quite right in denying that perceptual knowledge is a matter of exercising rationality, but it uncritically retains the core of the rationalist doctrine, that the epistemic role of perception is to be understood in terms of its role in the formation of perceptual *beliefs*. A truly empiricist approach eschews that view.

Then how do perceptual explanations of knowledge actually work? And what explains perceivers' self-knowledge? Since I find aspects of Ayers's view on these questions puzzling, I will proceed in two steps. I first lay out a possible view that is in keeping with many of the things Ayers says and, moreover, to my mind, extremely promising. For ease of reference I call this the recognitional model. I shall then compare this with a more radical, but to my mind less inviting, picture that is encouraged by certain other things Ayers says. I shall call this the non-conceptualist model.

To use one of Ayers's examples, suppose you can tell that the animal before you is a tiger. It is not very plausible to suggest that you must have *inferred* it was a tiger from independently known premises describing its visual appearance. Your knowledge is of a sort that is 'achieved by recognizing what one sees on the basis of [its] characteristic appearance' (p. 110), but the achievement, I think Ayers would agree, is not (usually) a matter of exercising some general purpose capacity, say assessing the probative force of evidence or drawing an inference to the best explanation. Rather you come to know the animal is a tiger because you are able non-inferentially to tell a tiger when you see one. Telling or recognizing something is a way of coming to *know* what sort of thing it is or what features or relations it has. (The most fully developed version of this model is due to Alan Millar. See, for example, Millar 2019.) Note that there is, in this explanatory schema, no mention of any basis on which you *believe* the animal to be a tiger. Your perception simply figures as part of the explanation of how you know it's a tiger. Another notable feature of the explanation is that it makes no reference to any 'representational content' of perception. Your visual experience explains your knowledge not in virtue of having a content with correctness conditions, but because it has a certain *object*, the tiger. I think all of this is exactly in line with Ayers's insistence on the 'primitive' authority of the senses as a source of knowledge.

How about the relationship between perceptual knowledge and self-knowledge? Ayers's main point here might be put by saying that perception itself informs us about the causal enabling conditions of perception and so of perceptual knowledge. Taking this, initially, in a low key, and illustrating the general point by what are admittedly specific features of visual experience, we might say this: seeing an object puts you in a position simultaneously to recognize what the object is like and to recognize the obtaining of various causal factors (such as lighting conditions or the distance between you and the object) in virtue of which you are able to see and recognize it. And we might add to this that the source of perceptual knowledge is 'perspicuous' in the sense that being able to reflect (at least in a rough and ready way) on how you can tell that the animal before you is a tiger is simply one aspect of what it means to be able visually to tell a tiger. As Ayers puts it: 'If I recognize

someone as the woman I spoke to a week ago, I know how I know that she is the same woman in that I know that I see and somehow recognize her, even if I can't put words to just what it is about her appearance and manner in virtue of which I recognize her.' (p. 64). Capacities for perceptual recognition, we might say, are inherently reflective in the sense that exercising them puts us in a position to reflect on how we know what we know. (Compare: according to a powerful tradition in the philosophy of action, exercising capacities for intentional action puts us in a position to reflect on what we are doing, and why.) In this way, 'all perceptual knowledge, as such, brings with it perceptual knowledge of how we know.' (p. 54)

This model is in the spirit of much of what Ayers says, not just about the primitive authority of the senses but also about the iniquities of the 'neo-Kantian', 'conceptualist' tradition, according to which the deployment of concepts is internal to perception. On the recognitional model, where the neo-Kantian tradition goes wrong, fundamentally, is in conceiving of perceptual experience as a matter of representing something to be so, rather than a relation to an object. (One might think of this as a symptom of an even more fundamental problem: the tradition's adherence to the project of explaining perceptual knowledge by reference to perceptual grounds for belief.) Yet, Ayers's resistance to 'conceptualism' is more radical than this reading allows: it extends not just to experience and the individuation of material objects (see the last section of ch. 3) but also, crucially, to *perceptual knowledge*.

Some bits of human knowledge, Ayers grants, are only available to those who have mastered specific conceptual capacities. Seeing that someone is playing chess, for instance, requires some grasp of the concept *chess*. But Ayers thinks this is so because of the nature of chess, not because of the nature of seeing-that. It is a mistake to think that the 'object' of knowledge—that is 'essentially propositional in form', or 'if not propositional, at least "conceptual"'. (p. 70) Not all knowledge—that 'involves recognition or classification or characterization under a determinate concept.' (p. 106) For example, 'I do not have to possess or grasp any "concept" at all in order to *feel that* (and so know that) something is pressing into my arm, or to

*see that* there is a large object in front of me.’ (p. 106) We can distinguish two claims here. One is that that we should give what might be called an extensionalist account to of the ‘object’ of knowing-that. Specifically, Ayers holds that knowing-that is a relation to an event or state of affairs, not an attitude to a proposition or fact. The other claim is that knowing-that does not, as such, require possession of concepts.

The latter claim has an obvious bearing on the explanation of perceptual knowledge and its perspicuity. When you see and thus know that there is a large object in front of you, you are not supposed to be exercising any capacity for classification or recognition ‘under a determinate concept’, say the capacity visually to tell the size or relative location of an object. Visually recognizing that an animal is a tiger is not, then, a prototype of seeing-that. In fact, Ayers regards it as something of an ancillary case. It is not ‘knowledge grounded directly on vision’ (p. 110), given that ‘being a tiger (..) goes beyond what is available to sight.’ (p. 110, n. 24) Given all this, neither first-order perceptual knowledge nor perceivers’ awareness of how they know what they know is adequately explained by reference to recognitional or classificatory capacities.

Then how are perceptual explanations of perspicuous knowledge supposed to work? The central idea of Ayers’s non-conceptualist model is that explaining perceptual knowledge turns on careful pursuit of the ‘phenomenology of perception’, the task of characterizing the ‘objects of perception as they are perceived.’ (p. 36) In Ayers hands, this activity reveals perception to be richer than we might have expected. He argues that one thing ‘normally given to the subject in perception itself’ is that different senses have the same object; this is ‘embodied in all the sensory information available to consciousness’. (p. 46) A proper phenomenology of perception should also acknowledge that vision and touch provide us with a direct awareness of mechanical interactions among physical objects. But that is not all. We are also said to be aware in perception of the *causal process* involved in perception itself: to be aware, that is, not just of some of the causal enabling conditions of perception but of objects ‘affecting’ our senses. Ayers introduces the idea by reference to touch but then extends it to perception in general, including vision:



‘when we see an object we are thereby perceptually aware of our seeing it as a causal process linking the object with ourselves as perceivers.’ (p. 55) Perception is said to involve perceptual awareness of the ‘causal relation between the object of perception and our experience of it’. (p. 54) In this way, ‘the causes of our perceptual knowledge’ are ‘in a sense “given”’. (p. 143)

This part of Ayers’s ‘phenomenology of perception’ involves material that has its home in the traditional ‘causal theory of perception’, such as the notion that to perceive an object is to be a relatum of a causal process, of an object ‘affecting’ the perceiver. Some will be sceptical about various aspects of the causal theory. Others will be sceptical about the idea that the causal process constitutively involved in perception is itself an immediate *object* of perception. But suppose we grant both ideas. How would they help to make perspicuous perceptual knowledge intelligible? On an autobiographical note, I might say that when I read Ayers’s ‘phenomenology of perception’ I expected this to be the first part of a two-stage explanation of perspicuous knowledge, where the second stage would detail how enjoying perceptual experiences of the sort delineated at the first stage enables us to acquire knowledge of what perceived objects are like. That expectation was disappointed; no second stage materialized. What I had not fully appreciated was just how austere or minimalist is Ayers’s conception of perceptual knowledge. Suppose we ask how you know that there is a large object in front of you. The form of the answer is not (as I had expected) that on seeing the thing, certain intellectual capacities of yours swing into action, by the exercise of which you come to see that the object is large and in front of you. Instead, the explanation simply registers the occurrence of a certain causal process: the object affects your vision and in that way causes your knowledge.

I now turn to two objections to the non-conceptual model. The first is a general worry about Ayers’s explanatory minimalism. Perceptual explanations of knowledge, as Ayers rightly emphasizes in his discussion of scepticism, can play a vital dialectical role. The idea of ‘primary knowledge’ is the idea of knowledge that ‘comes, as one might put it, with its own built-in credentials.’ (p. 143) If you know how you know

that *p*, you have an effective response to anyone who thinks good to challenge your judgement that *p* by asking 'How do you know?' The problem is that Ayers's minimalist picture makes it hard to understand this dialectical or normative dimension of perceptual explanations of knowledge. Intuitively, part of the import of such explanations is that they provide a good reason for thinking that the attitude or state you express by judging that *p* is indeed knowledge (and not, as a sceptic might have suspected, mere belief). On the recognitional model, this 'vindicatory' role is readily intelligible: the explanation shows your attitude to *p* to have been the result of the exercise of a capacity for perceptually recognizing — i.e. coming to *know* — whether *p*. On the other hand, it is not clear that bare appeal to the 'cause' of someone's knowing something provides much of a reason for thinking that knowledge is what she has. Note that the 'causes' of knowledge are extremely varied: they include the subject's being in a state of wakefulness, her interests, brain activity, and so on. You might say that the vindicatory role of the explanation is secured in this way: perceptual knowledge is caused by the event or state of affairs that constitutes its 'object'. But it's not clear that this is sufficient. On the face of it, a mere belief or even a conjecture might well be caused by the state of affairs it is about.

The second objection concerns Ayers's account of perceivers' self-knowledge. We can distinguish two ingredients in that account. Perceptual knowledge that *p* is said to 'come along with' and to 'depend on' 'immediate knowledge of its own causality'. (143) Thus, seeing that *p* comes along with and depends on knowing how one knows that *p*. We might call this the Platonic element. Being a case of 'primary knowledge', perceptual knowledge exhibits the 'perspicuity' Plato and 'traditional epistemology' are said to have regarded as an essential feature of knowledge. Another element is the claim that perceivers' self-knowledge is itself *a case of perceptual knowledge*. Ayers's rich phenomenology, according to which we are perceptually aware of the causal process of perception, is meant to show that perception itself gives rise to knowledge of the causal origin of perceptual knowledge. Since Ayers associates that idea with Locke, call it the Lockean element. Trouble looms when we put the two elements together. Your knowledge of how you know that *p* (when you can see that

p) is to be explained, according to the Lockean element, in the very same way as your knowledge that p. It is simply another case of seeing what is so: you see that you can see (and thus know) that p. Now, since seeing what is so comes along with and depends on self-knowledge, according to the Platonic element, you must have another piece of (perceptual) self-knowledge: knowledge of how you know how you know that p; and so forth. Yet it is surely implausible to think that a humble piece of perceptual knowledge involves an infinite hierarchy of self-knowledge. There seems to be a tension, then, between the Platonic and the Lockean elements. If perceptual knowledge essentially comes along with self-knowledge, it is hard to see how self-knowledge can itself be a *case* of perceptual knowledge.

### 3. Rationality

To summarize, we can distinguish three central commitments of Ayers's 'new empiricism':

*Primitive authority*: the explanatory connection between perception and knowledge-that is primitive; it is not open to analysis in terms of perceptual grounds for belief.

*Perspicuity*: knowledge grounded in perceptual experience involves knowledge of how one knows what one knows.

*Non-conceptualism*: perceptual knowledge does not require possession of conceptual capacities (except in special cases, e.g. seeing that someone is playing chess).

Why is Ayers wedded to *Non-conceptualism*? It is tempting to think that *Non-conceptualism* simply reflects Ayers's 'extensionalist' approach to the content of knowing-that. But that cannot be quite right. Even when you see that someone is playing a game of chess, the 'object' of your knowledge, according to Ayers, is the event of the game being played. Yet this is compatible with acknowledging that your knowledge requires possession of the concept *chess*. Then what is the case for *Non-conceptualism*? This is not an easy question to answer, partly because Ayers does not always clearly distinguish between non-conceptualism about perceptual

experience and about knowledge. Much of the discussion of conceptualism in chapter 3 is dedicated to objections to McDowell's evolving views on the nature of perception. This, though, provides no direct support for a non-conceptualist account of perceptual knowledge. As far as I can tell, Ayers's main point is that non-conceptualism about knowledge is required if we are to protect 'the common-sense assumption that our senses and the basic knowledge of our environment they afford us are faculties and knowledge such as other animals possess.' (p. 70) Conceptualists about knowledge may allow that 'knowledge is to be ascribed to animals and infants', but are committed to regarding this as 'second-class, preconceptual, prelinguistic proto-knowledge, less than fully knowledge.' (ibid.) That sort of picture, in Ayers's view, not only jars with commonsense. It is also falsified by recent findings from animal psychology. He writes that there is 'mounting evidence' of the intelligence displayed by numerous species of non-human animals, including 'animals as distantly related to us as fish and even octopuses — evidence that makes McDowell's 'sharp distinction between the rational, speaking animal' and other animals 'look just a little bit old-fashioned.' (p. 78)

I want to conclude with two questions about this line of argument. First, is Ayers right about the commitments of a conceptualist view of knowledge? I suggest the answer is: in part. Ayers is right that McDowell and other conceptualists about perceptual knowledge distinguish between different 'species' of the genus *knowing-that*. (McDowell 1994, Boyle 2016) Your visually grounded knowledge that someone is playing a game of chess differs from a blackbird's visually grounded knowledge that a certain worm affords eating not just in content but in nature, given the different kinds of capacities implicated in the two knowledges. Ayers's representation of this view, however, also contains an element of caricature. The 'two-species' view is surely not committed to disparaging animal knowledge as 'second-class'. Compare: to say that eagles, dolphins and humans have different species of the generic capacity 'locomotion' is not to imply that eagles and dolphins have only second-class mobility. Nor, furthermore, is it clear that the two-species view offends commonsense. This depends on whether the commonsensical idea that we share perceptual-epistemic faculties with non-human animals is to be construed

at the level of 'specific' capacities or at the level of their 'genus', and it is not obvious how to extract an answer to that question from commonsense.

My second question is harder to answer. Is Ayers's insistence on the first construal — we share 'specific', not just 'generic', capacities for perceptual knowledge with non-human animals — compatible with *Perspicuity*? It seems to me there are grounds for suspecting it is not. Recall Antognazza and Ayers's transcendental argument for the importance of 'primary knowledge'. To be able to know anything we need to have *some* knowledge that is acquired by perspicuous direct contact with its object, on pain of our judgements being empty. I complained that there is lacuna here: why should the content-providing role of 'direct contact' be assumed to be essentially self-conscious? And I suggested that a plausible response, drawing on Ayers's discussion of the question 'How do you know?', would be this: human perceptual knowledge involves the capacity to judge, which involves the capacity to offer reasons for judgements; and the most basic way to do so, in the case of perceptual judgements, is to explain how one knows what one judges to be so. The point that matters in the current context is that this route to *Perspicuity* would make it hard to sustain a 'same-species' construal of shared perceptual-epistemic faculties, given that few, if any, non-human animals seem to go in for the practice of making judgements.

Here is another way to bring out the issue. Suppose we ask whether (e.g.) chimpanzees are 'self-conscious' or have 'metacognition' — specifically, whether they are aware of their own first-order perceptual knowledge. Animal psychologists expend much time and ingenuity on devising experiments that would shed light on this sort of question. How will they react if we tell them that the answer must be 'yes' since chimpanzees undoubtedly possess perceptual knowledge, something that essentially comes along with self-awareness? There is a risk here that Ayers's caustic response to McDowell may backfire. It would be unsurprising if our psychologists called *Perspicuity* 'a little bit old-fashioned' (especially when told about its Platonic roots). It is true that Ayers tries to preempt this sort of worry. He denies that seeing that one can see that *p* requires possession of the concept *seeing* — so the case, in

his view, is unlike the case of seeing that someone is playing chess. And he takes this to make room for the idea that we share perceptual self-awareness ‘with other higher animals’ (58, n. 46). For one thing, though, it is surely significant that he refers to ‘higher animals’ here. What about the ‘lower’ ones, such as, say, fish and octopuses? But in any case, the main problem is that *a priori* considerations about the nature of perceptual knowledge seem to be a shaky basis for attributing perceptual self-awareness to non-human animals. Intuitively, the sorts of issues to which animal psychologists devote so much energy can only properly be illuminated by empirical work. Friends of *Perspicuity* may be well-advised to allow that there are cases and cases, and that all species of perceptual knowledge may not be ‘perspicuous’.

I want to emphasize that my discussion of this extraordinarily rich book has, perforce, been very selective. I have not been able to go into Ayers’s treatment of scepticism or his critique of externalism, for example. I hope enough has been said, though, to give a sense of the major accomplishment that *Knowing and Seeing* represents, and of the major benefits contemporary epistemology stands to reap from taking it seriously.\*

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