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EMPIRICAL REASON: ANSWERS TO GUPTA, MCDOWELL, AND SIEGEL

BILL BREWER

Introduction

I am grateful to Anil Gupta, John McDowell, and Susanna Siegel, for their thoughtful and probing comments and questions (Gupta, 2019; McDowell, 2019; Siegel, 2019). They help me to clarify and improve my own views on our shared concerns. I consider them in turn.

Response to Gupta

Gupta's comments (Gupta, 2019) on my account of visual similarities and looks focus on a fundamental point of disagreement between us that is also central to my own comments on his position (Brewer, 2019b). In my terminology, this is the relation between a correct theoretical characterization of the ways worldly objects look in perception, on the one hand, and the nature of those very things that are the objects of our acquaintance, on the other. I appreciate the opportunity to engage further in this debate. He concludes by urging me to retract a disjunctivist revision that I recently made to my position in response to an important exchange with David de Bruijn (Brewer et al, 2018) that will also be a focus in my discussion with McDowell below. The upshot of my reflection on

Gupta's comments is actually to strengthen my conviction in that revision and thus to reinforce the fundamental disagreement between us. So, although he only explicitly raises the recent revision at the end of his discussion, I respond throughout in that context. According to the revised account, for observable Fs such as colour and shape:

(O1) S sees o iff S is visually acquainted (v-acquainted) with o from a given point of view and in certain circumstances, together designated 'P'.

(O2) o thinly looks F iff S is acquainted with o's Fness or o merely has Visually Relevant Similarities (VRs) with paradigm exemplars of F from P.

(O3) o thickly looks F iff o thinly looks F and S registers o's Fness (conceptually, as F) or merely registers o's VRs with paradigm Fs.

Gupta's first observation is to point out correctly that the key notion of VRs figuring here is a four-place notion, rather than the three-place notion suggested by (O2): o has VRs from P with paradigm Fs (o*) from P*. I previously and misleadingly rolled the normality of the point of view and circumstances, P*, of paradigm perceptions into the status of o* as a paradigm. I explicitly acknowledge Gupta's point and would now emphasize it by adding that the paradigm Fs invoked in (O2) and (O3) refer to actual exemplars of F in situations in which S may be v-acquainted with their Fness.

This highlights a key point of my account that Gupta goes on to criticize, namely that the correct characterization of looking F has to be anchored in the nature of Fness itself. Looking F is a specific modification of conscious experience. Which

one? According to me, it is that modification of consciousness canonically characterized in terms of what it is to be F, as looking just that way rather than any other. For the observable Fs that both Gupta and I are concerned with, such as colour and shape, this is not merely a symptomatic look, as sweet tomatoes happen to have a reddish rather than a greenish look, where this might equally well have been reversed. Looking sweet (of tomatoes) is precisely not like looking red itself, or looking square, in this respect.

As I argue in my discussion of Gupta's own position (Brewer, 2019b), observable looks are not subject to the contingent permutation of symptomatic looks. For a particularly clear example, looking square is the conscious condition of looking precisely the way that square things, rather than round things, are, and this is not an accidental feature of that perceptual condition that might equally well have been reversed. If it were reversed, then the condition in question would be that of looking round instead.

This resistance to contingent permutation is in my view crucial to the key role that both Gupta and I stress for looking F in the acquisition of genuine concepts of Fness. For acquiring such concepts essentially involves knowledge of what being F is: substantive knowledge, expressible with suitable attentional direction in the presence of experience of something looking F by 'being F is being like that', where this is substantive knowledge in the sense that it is not knowledge to be followed by the qualification 'however that may actually be', but rather consists in knowledge of which way of being being F actually is (Brewer, 2019a). Looking F is a conscious perceptual condition whose subjective nature is

partially constituted by the nature of Fness itself and thereby reveals what this is. Of course, experience in which something looks F is possible in the absence of any object of acquaintance that is F, as Gupta rightly insists and the second disjuncts of (02) and (03) explicitly recognize in cases of illusion. Cases of hallucination are to be given a quite different account (Brewer, 2011, esp. ch. 5). But the nature of looking F as the specific modification of conscious experience that it is can only be given by anchoring this to the Fness of certain objects of visual acquaintance as the first disjuncts of (02) and (03) above stipulate.

It may help to sharpen our disagreement here to focus on Gupta's explicit claim that "It is appearances (and not paradigm exemplars) that are important to our grasp of a concept" (2019, p. x). He illustrates the point in connection with colour; but the fundamental opposition is clearer in relation to shape.

Translating his account into those terms, he insists that "We associate with ['square']... certain appearances that guide our application of ['square']... in perceptual situations. We might retain no mental or physical trace of the exemplars through which we acquired the concept ["square"]..., but this would not in the least damage our grasp of the concept" (p. x). I could not disagree more with this view. It seems to me subject to a fatal dilemma over the question whether the relevant appearances are merely symptomatic looks or otherwise.

Suppose, on the one hand, that appearances of squareness are symptomatic looks: an experiential condition with a given subjective nature that happens to correlate generally with the presence of squareness in the world, yet might just as well have been quite different. The subjective nature of the appearance of

squarenenss might instead, and equally effectively, have been that of the experiential condition that happens to correlate with the presence of circularity in the world, and vice versa. Such appearances are therefore neutral on the actual nature of the shape property of which they are supposedly appearances. They simply serve as a reliable sign of its presence, as the redness of a tomato does of its sweetness. We, as their subject, therefore retain no mental or physical trace of their shape exemplars. In that case, although appearances of squarenenss may lead us reliably to utter 'square' in the presence of worldly squareness, such appearances are incapable of providing us with any knowledge of which particular shape property squareness is. We may think of this as that property of which this appearance is a reliable sign, but this might just as well be circularity as squarenenss. So we thereby have no understanding of what squarenenss itself is, and therefore no genuine grasp of the concept 'square'.

Suppose, on the other hand, that appearances of squareness are not merely symptomatic, but rather constitutively tied to the nature of the shape property of squarenenss itself, as I claim is the case above. They are in that case resistant to contingent permutation, non-neutral on the nature of the property of which they are appearances, and hence apt to serve as source of the knowledge of which shape squarenenss is that is in turn essential to grasp of the concept of that shape. This is only possible, though, because such appearances precisely do constitutively retain a trace of the genuine exemplars of squareness only by reference to which they may be identified as the particular modifications of conscious perceptual experience that they are, along the lines set out in (O1)-(O3) above. The thesis that the correct characterization of looking F has to be

anchored in the nature of Fness itself, which I endorse in (O1)-(O3) and Gupta denies, is therefore essential to the role that we both seek to elucidate of perception in the acquisition of concepts of observable properties of worldly things.

Gupta (2019) has three further objections specifically to the disjunctivist revision ((O1)-(O3)) to my account of thin and thick looks. First, he argues that it fails adequately to capture the rationality of judgements based on illusory perceptions. Second, he claims that it in any case entails my previous non-disjunctivist view (2011, 2018). Third, he suggests that it is tantamount to the adoption of Factual Reasons Priority that I rightly reject. I take these in turn.

First, he rightly infers from the revised account that illusory experiences in which something looks F are thereby inferior to non-illusory experiences in their rational support for judgements of Fness. For the latter but not the former provide what I call objectual reasons in being cases of acquaintance with partial truthmakers for ascriptions of Fness, namely the Fness of the objects in question. He appears simply to assume that this is a vice. I claim instead that it is a significant virtue partly motivating the disjunctivist revision. For I take reasons to be precisely what confer the status of knowledge. Yet, in the absence of this asymmetry, in the best possible epistemic case in which a person sees an o that is F, then for all the reasons that he thereby has to judge it to be F, it might just as well not be F and only merely illusorily look F. His reasons therefore fall short of conferring a genuine status of knowledge on his judgement made on this basis. On the revised view on the other hand, he is in such a case actually acquainted

with o's Fness. This provides his reason for judgement and is of course not consistent with o not being F. Of course, we understand why he is apt to make a mistaken judgement in the illusory case, for the object of his acquaintance has VRs in that situation with paradigm exemplars of F. Still, his failure to know is a deficiency in his rational standing itself, rather than an unlucky break that he can have no reason to exclude even in the good case. Put the other way, his rational standing in the good case is sufficient to rule out any such error: his reason for judgement, namely o's Fness itself, is simply inconsistent with the falsity of his judgement. As I say, I take all this to be a virtue of the position.

Second, Gupta claims that the revised disjunctivist account entails the earlier non-disjunctive view of thin looks at least. For the first disjunct of (O2) implies its second, which in turn constitutes the full extent of that earlier view. The revision is therefore no real improvement. I deny the entailment. The second disjunct of (O2) is this: "o merely has Visually Relevant Similarities (VRs) with paradigm exemplars of F from P". It contains a 'merely' that Gupta's formulation omits. This is intended precisely to make the disjunction exclusive. On its second, illusory disjunct, there is no actual Fness for the subject to be acquainted with, although o does have VRs with paradigm Fs. So the two disjuncts are actually inconsistent, the first does not entail the second. Nevertheless, Gupta is right that on both disjuncts S is acquainted with an object o that has VRs with paradigm exemplars of from P. This is what makes them both cases of thin F-looks. This alone entirely fails to capture the nature of that look, what makes it the case that that condition obtains in each case. Here we must treat the first disjunct as basic. We only understand which perceptual condition something's looking F is when

we recognize that its primary instantiations are the subject's acquaintance with an object's actual Fness. Its derivative instantiations count as cases precisely in virtue of the relations in the circumstances in question between their non-F objects of acquaintance and the paradigm Fs that are the objects of acquaintance on the first disjunct.

Gupta's third supplementary objection connects closely with issues that are central to my response to McDowell below. Gupta suggests that my move to (O1)-(O3) above commits me to Factual Reasons Priority, the view that it is because perceptual experience provides S with factual reasons – that is to say, consists in consciousness of facts that may serve as explanantia in rationalizing explanations of why she believes what she does about the world around her – that it provides her with knowledge. Yet I explicitly reject Factual Reasons Priority in favour of the strictly weaker Objectual Reasons Priority, the thesis that in seeing that o is F, in the primary cases that I am concerned with here, in which S is acquainted with o's Fness, S is thereby visually conscious of an objectual reason to apply F: a concrete feature of the world that makes her judgement true. My contention is that this is crucial to the explanation of why seeing that o is F in such cases is, as it undeniably is, a way of knowing that o is F. (2018, Brewer et al, 2018). Gupta claims that my move to the disjunctive account is therefore objectionably inconsistent with other features of my position that he prefers. Ironically, McDowell's (2019) objection is roughly the reverse, that my revision fails to secure Factual Reasons Priority, or at least, as I explain below, a form of Factual Reasons No-Priority, and is objectionable on that count instead.

Suffice it to say for now that, on the question of the entailment from (O1)-(O3) to Factual Reasons Priority, I will argue that McDowell is right and Gupta wrong. Acquaintance with an object, o, and its observable property, F, is not to be construed in terms of knowledge of any proposition from which the truth of the judgement that o is F follows, and which therefore provides a factual reason for that judgement. Rather, it constitutes perceptual consciousness of the concrete worldly objectual reasons for that judgement, thereby providing its experientially-based rational ground. So Gupta's final objection also fails. I will argue below that McDowell is also wrong to claim that my failure to commit to Factual Reasons No-Priority is objectionable.

Response to McDowell

The focus of McDowell's (2019) discussion is the question whether my disjunctivist revision ((O1)-(O3) above) is a sufficient improvement upon my earlier position (2011, 2018) to respond adequately to de Bruijn's objection that I rightly accept (Brewer et al, 2018). He makes a series of points to suggest that the answer should be in the negative. I consider these in turn.

First, he objects that o's Fness is not a possible object of acquaintance for someone like me who takes acquaintance not to require the subject's engagement of conceptual capacities. For consciousness of o's Fness has a kind of unity that is only possible in the act of bringing o under the concept F. I think this objection is a product of my unclarity. I agree that consciousness of o's being F – roughly, seeing that o is F – requires just the unity of conceptual subsumption

that McDowell proposes, and that figures in what he helpfully describes as the second level of my basic view. What I intend instead as an object of acquaintance independent of such conceptual engagement at the first level of thin looks is simply the Fness that o has: its particular instance of Fness. McDowell accepts this as a legitimate object of acquaintance in my sense and in any case moves on to a second concern that goes to the core of our disagreement and is also prominent in my own discussion of his views.

He raises his second concern by asking how expanding the subject's visual consciousness to include acquaintance with o's Fness itself in this sense is supposed to ensure, as he puts it, "that the reason that o's Fness constitutes for the judgment that o is F is recognized by the subject as such" (2019, p. x), where this notion of recognizing a reason as such is, I take it, controlled by the need to avoid the de Bruijn accusation against my earlier view that, for all the subject knows in being in the position that I describe in my overall explanation of why seeing that o is F is a way of knowing that o is F, o may not actually be F, but merely look F. I begin by offering a direct answer to this question and then supplement this with a reminder about the importance on my account of a certain kind of ascent routine in arriving at second-order knowledge of the knowledgeable status of first order perceptual judgement.

My disjunctively revised two-level account of (a) conscious acquaintance with o and its Fness and (b) conceptual registration of o's Fness as such leading to judgement that o is F is intended to explain the knowledgeable status of seeing that o is F. At its heart lies the idea of S's perceptual consciousness of objectual

reasons for that judgement, her acquaintance with concrete features of the perceived world that guarantee the truth of her judgement: o and o's Fness. My claim in direct response to McDowell is that this conscious acquaintance constitutes a form of first-order recognition of o's Fness as a reason to judge that o is F without explicit second-order judgement of its status as such. Perceptual consciousness is crucial here. If S simply entertains the thought that a ball, b, that happens to be red and is hidden in a box before her, is red, then she has no recognizable reason to judge that b is red in virtue of her relation in thought with b's redness, even though b's redness remains an objectual reason to judge that b is red. For one thing, it is far from clear that she has in this case a genuine relation with b's particular instance of redness. More to the point, even if she did have, or we could simply define a relation that she stands in in these terms, this would clearly be quite the wrong kind of relation to sustain knowledgeable judgement. Conscious perception, on the other hand, is a kind of investigation or interrogation of the world around her, a questioning and answering in accord with her interests and purposes as to the colours, shapes, and other observable properties of the things that she encounters or seeks out. Acquaintance with b's redness in this context leaves her with nothing else reasonably to think about its colour other than that it is that colour, namely red; and it does so in a way that is entirely recognizable to her as such. In the absence of any reason for doubt, it would evidently be unreasonable to judge it any other way. Conscious acquaintance with objectual reasons brings with it a form of subjective recognition of their status as such that I claim is adequate to avoid the implication that, in making a judgement that o is F on that basis, one is in a position in which, for all one thereby knows, o may not be F.

The key claim in all of this for current purposes is that conscious acquaintance with o's Fness is a relation with a concrete objectual reason to judge that o is F in which the status of o's Fness as such an objectual reason is recognizable to the subject independently of any second-order judgement to the effect that her experience thereby guarantees the truth of her first-order judgement. This is a central commitment of my position. Its basic motivation is what I take to be a core empiricist conviction about the nature and role of perceptual consciousness: the idea that consciousness of o's Fness evidently gives a person nothing else reasonably to think concerning whether o is F than that it is. In the throes of conscious acquaintance, this is recognizably the right thing to think about whether or not o is, F in virtue of the conscious presentation of o's Fness itself in experience. That is to say, the status of o's Fness as an objectual reason to judge that o is F is recognizable to the subject.

First-order perceptual knowledge about the world acquired in this way in turn warrants ascent to second-order knowledge of its status and rational basis in perception. Prefixing the judgment that she makes about the world on the basis of her experience with the operator 'it appears to me that', S arrives at knowledge of a true description of her experience that is as yet neutral between its being a good case of o's Fness being manifest to her and a bad case of this merely appearing to be so. Putting this together with her first-order perceptual knowledge that o is F, she can infer that this is a good case, and hence that the experience that constitutes her ground is indeed one that guarantees the truth of her perceptual judgment that is grounded on it. Thus, she arrives at second-

order knowledge that she knows that *o* is *F* on the basis of her acquaintance with *o*'s Fness itself.

McDowell's third point generalizes his core objection to my view here. He begins by rightly pointing out that explicit knowledge of the epistemic status of a knowledgeable first-order perceptual judgement is on my account additional knowledge over and above anything essential to that first-order perceptual knowledge itself. It is arrived at by the ascent routine just described, if/when the question of the epistemic status of first-order perceptual judgement happens to arise, which is surely quite rarely in the normal run of things. He goes on to argue that any account with this feature is bound to be unsatisfactory in the light of de Bruijn objection, entailing as it does that the putatively knowledgeable status of the first-order judgement is compatible with the subject being in a position in which, for all she knows her judgment may be false. As I argue at greater length in my own discussion of McDowell's views (Brewer, 2019b), and recapitulate briefly above, I regard his argument here as incomplete. My own position effectively constitutes a counterexample to it. It is illuminating to pursue the discussion further, though since McDowell helpfully connects these ideas with my discussion of Reasons Priority.

Recall that my own position is to reject Factual Reasons Priority and endorse Objectual Reasons Priority (Brewer, 2018). In the current context, the crucial instance of Factual Reasons Priority is the thesis that perceptual experience provides *S* with knowledge that *o* is *F* only in virtue of providing her with prior knowledge that her experience is one that suffices for the truth of this

judgement. Alongside my rejection of this thesis, I endorse its converse, that S's perceptual knowledge that o is F is prior to and explanatory of any additional knowledge that her experience is one of acquaintance with o's Fness and hence suffices for the truth of her first order judgement that o is F, to which she may ascend by the routine just described. McDowell also rejects the crucial instance Factual Reasons Priority. His position is distinguished from mine by the fact that he endorses what might be called Factual Reasons No-Priority, the thesis that (i) S's perceptual knowledge that o is F and (ii) her knowledge that the experience on which this is based is one that suffices for its truth are both products of a single cognitive act, neither prior to the other, and that they must be so if the first order perceptual judgement is to be genuinely knowledgeable at all. According to McDowell, then, Factual Reasons Priority is mistaken in giving (ii) epistemic priority and I am mistaken in given (i) priority.

I do not myself fully understand the thesis that these two judgements issue from a single cognitive act. They have quite different contents, one that o is F, the other that my current experience guarantees that o is F. Although the latter content entails the former, the former does not entail the latter. So they are by that light at least quite distinct judgments. Indeed, I believe that it is possible for a person to know the former through perception even without possession of the concepts necessary even to entertain the latter. I explain how a subject of the former perceptual knowledge equipped with suitable concepts is thereby in a position to ascend to knowledge of the latter second-order content concerning the experiential ground of her perceptual knowledge. But McDowell's thesis is explicitly stronger than this. For he characterizes the ascent routine as providing

only additional knowledge to the first-order perceptual knowledge itself in a way that is thereby objectionable. I just cannot see how to make sense on any defensible individuation of cognitive acts, though, of the stronger thesis that these two judgements with such distinct subject matter are nevertheless products a single cognitive act. Furthermore, as I have tried to clarify above, my own position demonstrates that McDowell's stronger Factual Reasons No-Priority thesis is after all not necessary to an adequate account of first-order perceptual knowledge.

Finally, this enables me to put in a different light McDowell's (2019) diagnosis of why I do not consider – and indeed, as he insists I should, adopt – his favoured Factual Reasons No-Priority. He rightly observes that this rests on my commitment to the concept-independence of our acquaintance with worldly things in basic visual consciousness. As he puts it, my (OV) is committed to “the thesis that being perceptually presented with worldly items is provided for by a subject's perceptual equipment independently of any involvement on the part of her conceptual capacities, which come into play only in her going on to make something of those worldly items” (2019, p. x). McDowell counters this with the suggestion that experience places worldly items before us, for us to make of them what we can, “by being itself already an exercise of self-conscious rational capacities” (p. x). Only by recognizing and accepting this, he contends, can we go on to frame a satisfactory epistemology for perceptual knowledge. I agree that our disagreement over the question whether conscious visual acquaintance with worldly things is already an exercise our self-conscious rational capacities is a, perhaps the, fundamental disagreement between us. I have tried to argue here

that failure to frame a satisfactory epistemology for perceptual knowledge is not in fact, as he claims, a consequence of my own negative answer.

Response to Siegel

Siegel's (2019) initial framing of the issue that she focusses on between us offers a helpful opportunity for me to be more explicit about what I take my project to be in this area. She poses the question as follows: "how does the fact that you're seeing a particular ordinary object (a cat, a shoe) constrain which phenomenal character your visual experience can have?" (2019, p. x). There is a way of hearing this that I think is operative in some of her critical comments to follow that is quite antithetical to my own aims and objectives. I do not suggest that Siegel explicitly endorses this way of thinking, or that she assumes that I do, and I simplify to make the point; but the picture suggested by her formulation is this. Cases of a person's seeing a particular object are given to us as such. We independently assign these, perhaps along with appropriate cases of illusion and hallucination, to equivalence classes on the basis of shared phenomenal character. Finally, we ask what how the fact that a given case is one of seeing *o*, say, constrains which equivalence class it falls into. In particular, does this class contain only other experiences of seeing *o* (from a particular point of view and in certain specific circumstances), and exclude every case of seeing $o' \neq o$ and every case of hallucination, regardless of whether these are introspectively indistinguishable from the starting case of seeing *o*?

Siegel characterizes my view by its commitment to an affirmative answer to this final question. I can see why. I do indeed offer an account of phenomenal character according to which the ways that things look to a subject consciously acquainted with a given worldly object are the looks of that very thing from the point of view and in the circumstances in question. But her way of posing the question and specifying my position as a result assumes what I deny, that it is uncontroversial which cases belong in which classes, in the sense that there is an agreed antecedent procedure for assigning cases of seeing, and hallucinating, to equivalence classes by sameness of phenomenal character. One way to do this of course would be on the basis of the relation of introspective indistinguishability: cases belong in the same classes iff they are introspectively indistinguishable. But, as Siegel rightly recognizes, this would be to beg the question against any view like mine on which it is a result that there are experiential conditions with distinct phenomenal characters that are nevertheless introspectively indistinguishable. Of course, I grant that the relation of introspective indistinguishability provides an important dimension of similarity and difference between perceptual experiences. Nevertheless, I deny that it constitutes or even coincides with their identity of phenomenal character.

Furthermore, and more importantly than its dialectical failing, the question-begging definition of sameness of phenomenal character in terms of introspective indistinguishability, or indeed any other that simply takes it for granted that perceptual experiences may be assigned to equivalence classes on the basis of shared phenomenal character entirely independently of theoretical consideration of what phenomenal character is and what it is supposed to be

answerable to, fails to give any substantive explanatory account of the nature of phenomenal character: what exactly this is and how and why it is that specific perceptual experiences have the phenomenal character that they do. This is a key component of my own project, though, and it goes missing in Siegel's framing of our disagreement. There are of course many possible ways into the philosophy of perception; but I regard the most fruitful basic question in the area as this: what is the most fundamental nature of our perceptual relation with the physical world around us? I understand this as a request for an account of what it is to perceive physical objects that is both explanatorily adequate and metaphysically acceptable. That is to say, the proposed account should explain and unify as far as possible the characteristic features of perception, such as its phenomenal character and its role in making thought and knowledge of the physical world possible, without objectionable metaphysical excess. On this way of thinking, phenomenal character is what is delivered by the best explanation of the way things are for the subject in perceiving the world around her by the best overall philosophical theory of perception in this sense. This must of course be capable of respecting all the important similarities and differences as these present themselves to subjects of perception; but it cannot be assumed in advance of sustained theoretical consideration exactly what form it will take. Certainly, it cannot be assumed without argument that it is bound to coincide with differences between their perceptual experiential conditions that are introspectively accessible to the subject. Furthermore, if we focus merely on the extensions of equivalences classes of perceptual experiences by sameness of phenomenal character, as Siegel apparently does in framing the issues between us, then we entirely ignore the question of the nature of phenomenal character

itself and its explanatory role in the overall philosophical theory perception that are my primary concern in the area. My project is the metaphysics of perceptual experience, an account of its nature as the phenomenon that it is that illuminates and explains its salient features and roles in a philosophically fruitful way.

Specific experiences may be put into equivalence classes in many ways – by the identity of their subject, by the days on which they occur, by their introspective indistinguishability, by their sameness of phenomenal character correctly construed, ... – but none of this elucidates their nature, or even the nature of their phenomenal character: what exactly such characters are and what it is in virtue of which specific experiences with them have them. That is my fundamental goal and it is missing from Siegel's set-up, which apparently assumes instead that all these notions are well defined and agreed in advance.

The remainder of Siegel's (2019) comments specifically directed at me focus on one of the arguments that I offer for Object View of perception, (OV), which I endorse in earlier work (2011) and modify as above in my discussions of perceptual experience and empirical reason that are the direct concern of this exchange (Brewer, 2018; Brewer et al 2018). The argument runs as follows.

1. Seeing a particular object, *o*, from a given point of view and in certain circumstances, together designated 'P', is compatible only with a limited range of experiential ways things look.
2. These limits on the looks compatible with genuine object-seeing are not adequately explained by the Content View (CV), which I take to be my main opposition.

3. They are well explained by my own (OV).
4. So (OV) is preferable on this count at least.

Siegel accepts premise (1). I am persuaded myself by recent work of Jorgen Dyrstad (2019) that the one specific such limit that she explicitly endorses, namely Dretske's Differentiation Condition (1969), is misguided. But I certainly do endorse other such limits as she points out and accepts for the sake of the discussion. These are effectively limits on the kind and degree of perceptual error that is compatible with genuine object-seeing. They delineate the boundary between illusion, where *o* is seen in spite of the fact that it looks quite different from the way it is in certain respects at least, and hallucination, where nothing in the world is actually seen.

Siegel objects to both my premises (2) and (3), spending most time on (2), where she has two related lines of argument. I take these critical points in turn.

First, she claims that the position, (CV), that I argue fails adequately to explain the limits on the looks compatible with genuine object-seeing is "suspiciously inflected" with my own commitments (2019, p. x). In the absence of these suspicious inflections, philosophers' actual content views of perception are easily up to the task of explaining the looks-limits on object-seeing. The inflection that I introduce is to commit (CV) to an explanation of perceptual relations, like object-seeing, that gives its appeal to the representational content of perceptual experience a fundamental role. Actual philosophers endorsing various content views concerning perception, including Siegel herself as she insists here, deny

this commitment. Explanations of when there is object-seeing going on may have absolutely nothing to do with the occurrence of perceptual experiences with specific representational contents, although Siegel gives no indication at this point of how the account of object-seeing might go in this context.

In response, I simply accept that I do impose an inflection along these lines on (CV). As I have said, the basic question that I take us to be concerned with in the philosophy of perception is ‘what is the most fundamental nature of our perceptual relation with the physical world around us?’, where this should be understood in the current context as a request for an account of object-seeing that is both explanatorily adequate and metaphysically acceptable. I take (CV) to be the view that appeals to perceptual content as a fundamental notion in this account. I absolutely do not insist that (CV) should make no appeal to any further explanatory materials in arriving at an adequate account of object-seeing. But I do insist that this should be the ultimate explanatory destination of the position. In the absence of any indication of how an independent explanation of object-seeing might go on such a view, it is impossible to evaluate its credentials here.

Second, Siegel goes on to argue that, even in the presence of the inflection that I give it, (CV) is able to explain the limits on looks compatible with genuine object-seeing. In the light of what has just been said, this must be her key objection. I am not certain I fully understand her argument here. The suggestion seems to be that (CV) may simply stipulate without any explanation various limits on the perceptual contents supposed to be compatible with object-seeing in various cases as a constraint on the obtaining of the relation between contentful

experiences and the objects seen in having them that itself admits of no further analysis beyond its obtaining when S sees o. This will certainly 'capture' the limits on looks compatible with object-seeing in a way. But it is entirely ad hoc and without any motivation other than adding an otherwise unmotivated clause to the position solely to avoid objection. Siegel rightly points out that there are differences of opinion between us concerning what are legitimate philosophical explanatory aims and requirements in the area. But I take it that such ad hoc stipulation is on any account at best a last resort.

Third, Siegel objects that (OV) is in a weaker position than I claim in explaining the restrictions in phenomenal character consistent with object-seeing. The (OV) explanation here is provided by idea that when S is acquainted with o from P – that is, when S sees o from that point of view and in those circumstances – the ways that o looks are given by the predicates 'F' such that, either S is acquainted with o's Fness, or o has Visually Relevant Similarities (VRSs) with paradigm exemplars of F from P. Siegel rightly points out that this explains a restriction on looks compatible object-seeing only if the notion of VRSs delineates those limits. Yet she objects that this notion is entirely unconstrained on my view and so unfit to provide the required explanation. I simply reject the claim that VRSs are unconstrained in any objectionable way.

I do acknowledge the role of experience and learning in determining what are VRSs in any particular case, and likewise consideration of the structure of the underlying neural processing. As I explain above in responding to Gupta, I do not, as Seigel suggests, regard the question of what constitute paradigm exemplars of

F as entirely unconstrained. These are instances of the observable Fs in situations in which S may be acquainted with their Fness. Still, the degrees of freedom that are indeed implicit in the notion of VRSs do imply that there will be a nuanced negotiation between philosophical and empirical considerations in specifying the correct limits on the looks compatible with object-seeing in any particular case. These will be genuine limits in any case, though, and this situation seems to me to be exactly as it should be.

Finally, Siegel issues a challenge to all of us involved in this exchange (2019, sect. 3.2). She asks how we evaluate the following principle

(FEC) S is directly perceptually aware that o is F only if o's being F explains why o looks F

in the light of the possibility that F-perception may involve a kind of cue-combination on which the initial neural processing responds only to features of o other than its Fness, effectively inferring Fness from its reliable correlation with the features initially detected, as in her imaginary account of the perceptual representation of the yellowness of a banana on the basis of initial detection of its shape and texture. If we endorse (FEC) and claim a priori that direct perceptual awareness is widespread, then we must rule out a priori that holistic cue-combination is at all common in perceptual processing. Siegel implicitly rejects this response as a wrongheaded a priori dictation to empirical psychology. If we reject (FEC), then, by expanding the states involved in holistic cue-combination to include in addition beliefs and other personal level attitudes,

Siegel purports to undermine the idea of a distinctively perceptual basis for direct perceptual awareness that appears integral to any empiricist commitment to the perceptual experiential grounding of non-perceptual intentionality.

This line of thought does lead to an interesting challenge to my view, but it has to be reformulated. First, it needs to take account of the fact that the fundamental experiential contribution to perceptual knowledge on my account is a subject's acquaintance with *o* and with *o*'s *F*ness, as elucidated in (O1)-(O3) above.

Second, (FEC) gives the impression as it stands that *o*'s looking *F* is a condition that it causally produced in *S* as a result of various stages of sensory and neural processing initiated by worldly impingements on her sensory surfaces. I also deny this traditional assumption. According to (OV), the fact that *o* looks *F* is a genuinely relational condition involving *S*, *o*, and *o*'s *F*ness, not to be found downstream of the neural activity in *S* to which light from *o* gives rise. Still, this neural activity plays an important enabling role in the obtaining of the relational-experiential condition itself (see Campbell, 2002, ch. 6.2, on the pane of glass model for the relational view). So I take it that the fully reformulated question for me concerns my attitude to the following Enabling Condition on Acquaintance.

(ECA) *S* is acquainted with *o*'s *F*ness only if *S*'s experiential relation with *o* is enabled by neural processing sensitive to *o*'s *F*ness.

Of course, the status of (ECA) depends on what exactly is supposed to be involved in neural processing being sensitive to *o*'s *F*ness; and I take refinement

on this to be the product of careful philosophical-empirical negotiation. But I am prepared to endorse a version of the condition with at least the following consequences. (1) In the imaginary case that Siegel describes in which the neural processing initiated by the presence of a banana is entirely independent of the colour of that particular banana then this cannot enable acquaintance with its yellowness. (2) likewise, in her development of the case, in which what the subject makes of the colour of what she sees is dependent upon the role of her personal level belief that bananas are yellow in response to more basic perceptual consciousness insufficient on its own to lead her to the view that what is before her is yellow, she is again not acquainted with the yellowness of that banana.

This already has implications of the form that Siegel implicitly rejects. If I know on any specific occasion that I am acquainted with o's Fness, or that at least there must be some occasions on which I am so acquainted, then I may infer that processing scenarios analogous to those imagined above are not on this occasion, or at least always, actual. Empirical investigation in relation to any particular worldly feature, F, may put pressure on my initial premises; but if those are secure, then I am happy to accept the conclusion, that I derive knowledge of an empirical neural processing constraint operative in my own case. This may appear puzzling, and it certainly opens up a wide range of controversial issues; but I end by pointing out that it is neither unique nor obviously objectionable.

Descartes's cogito derives a contingent existence claim from introspective knowledge of thinking (Descartes, 1986); the truth of various forms of functionalism along with knowledge of my own mentality plausibly entail specific causal conditions on my cognitive architecture (Heal, 1986); similarly in the case of the Language of Thought hypothesis (Davies, 1997) and various philosophical theses about the causal systematicity of language understanding (Evans, 1981). Broadening out further, the history of philosophy is well stocked with examples of transcendental arguments purporting to derive contingent conclusions about the world that may also be the subject of various forms of empirical confirmation or disconfirmation from introspective self-knowledge in conjunction with certain philosophical theses (Stroud, 1968; Stern, 2000; Brewer, 2000). There are of course many important issues raised by this general situation and by each of the specific cases in particular, and a variety of positions taken in response to them; but the relevant initiating philosophical positions are rarely rejected immediately as a result of this phenomenon. This strikes me as exactly as it should be. The issues should be raised and addressed in detail on their own terms and resolved accordingly in each case. Similarly here, I see nothing immediately objectionable in the possibility that I may be in a position to derive knowledge of a certain sensitivity to Fness in the neural enabling conditions of my acquaintance with Fness that I propose on philosophical grounds to stand at the foundation of my perceptual knowledge of the world around me.

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