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Empirical Reason and Sensory Experience

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Logic, Epistemology, and the Unity of Science aims to reconsider the question of the unity of science in light of recent developments in logic. At present, no single logical, semantical or methodological framework dominates the philosophy of science. However, the editors of this series believe that formal frameworks, for example, constructive type theory, deontic logics, dialogical logics, epistemic logics, modal logics, and proof-theoretical semantics, have the potential to cast new light on basic issues in the discussion of the unity of science.

This series provides a venue where philosophers and logicians can apply specific systematic and historic insights to fundamental philosophical problems. While the series is open to a wide variety of perspectives, including the study and analysis of argumentation and the critical discussion of the relationship between logic and philosophy of science, the aim is to provide an integrated picture of the scientific enterprise in all its diversity.

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Empirical Reason
and Sensory Experience

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Preface

The contributions in this volume emerged from the cheerful discussions of the second Perceptual Experience and Empirical Reason (PEER) conference. Like its predecessor from 2016, this second conference was organized by Anil Gupta and John McDowell to be held in person in 2020 at the University of Pittsburgh; but in the throes of the COVID pandemic, it ended up being first postponed and then held online in 2021. Despite the limitations of the online setting, the conference ended up being no less lively, thought provoking, challenging, and fun than the best of conferences, as the debates contained herein will bear witness.

This volume aims to preserve and extend the fruitful discussions of the 2021 conference, by matching each lead contribution with several critical comments, along with the lead author's rejoinders. The volume also includes a further extended debate that has developed between some conference participants. We believe that this format can produce not only a better philosophy but also a more engaging and illuminating read. We think that it has done so here, and it is owing to the efforts of the contributors, who have read and re-read each other's work, studied it in depth, and replied to it thoughtfully. We owe them enormous thanks.

Another happy duty is to thank the participants of the 2021 PEER conference. They have made a genuine impact on the content of the debates that occurred during and following the conference. Special thanks goes to the conference's over forty (!) designated commentators and invited discussants, who led the Q&A sessions with their probing questions. Tomas Albergo, Sofia Berinstein, Will Conner, and Diana Volkar deserve exceptional thanks for putting in the enormous behind-the-scenes work that made the conference come together. Our deep thanks also goes to Patrick Chandler, for his tireless work reviewing the book manuscript and providing valuable comments and suggestions.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Logic, Epistemology, and the Unity of Science book series for serving as this volume's home at Springer. The Logic, Epistemology, and the Unity of Science series is known for welcoming a wide variety of perspectives and for providing a venue where philosophers and logicians can apply specific systematic and historic insights to fundamental philosophical problems. Our volume is indeed rich with a multitude of rival perspectives, each bringing its own rich

systematic and historic insights to bear on the deepest questions of perceptual epistemology. The series is thus a fitting home for our volume, and we are delighted it has been welcomed to it.

February 2023   Miloš Vuletić
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Miloš Vuletić and Ori Beck

Abstract This chapter provides an overview of the volume, covering the major issues discussed within it as well as offering an outline of the contents of each of its parts.

Perceptual experience gives us an epistemic perch on reality. It is owing to such experience that we know whether our socks match in the morning, or whether there's milk in the fridge. Take experience away, and our judgments about the milk and the socks matching would be epistemically no better than guesswork (assuming they would even be possible). This much, we take it, is common ground.

The trouble is that as soon as one dips one's toes into epistemological waters, the common ground we set out with turns into quicksand. For, first, how is it that perceptual experience gives us an epistemic perch on reality? Does it do so by constituting evidence or reasons for judgment? Does it do so by reliably indicating how the world is, or by serving as a link in a reliable belief-forming process? Or does it, instead, do so by making it rational to transition from our parochial views to certain further judgments? Or perhaps it does its thing by simply revealing facts to us, or by simply being identical with knowledge? Second, are all perceptual experiences on a par in terms of the epistemic perch they offer? Do perceptions offer us a better perch than hallucinations? And what of illusions? Third, what kind of epistemic perch do experiences offer us? Do they most immediately provide us with knowledge, and only derivatively equip our judgments with other kinds of good-making epistemic statuses (e.g., entitlement, justification, rationality, non-culpability), or is it the other way around? And are we even right to assume that experiences can equip judgments with good-making epistemic statuses, or is it that their epistemic force

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is always conditional upon further epistemic considerations? Fourth, what property of experience accounts for its ability to give us an epistemic perch on reality? Is it its phenomenal character? Is it its ability to relate us to worldly facts? Is it its evolutionary history? Is it its natural function? Fifth, must experience and judgment satisfy certain constraints for them to be epistemically related? Must they both be conceptual? Must they both have representational content? Must there be an interface between them? Must the former relate us to the reality that is the subject matter of the latter? Despite centuries of philosophical scrutiny, these questions and their ilk have no settled answers.

In an effort to make headway on these difficult questions, this volume gathers five cutting-edge lead contributions on perceptual epistemology, and subjects each of them to expert critical discussion and debate. Each of the lead contributions—by Anil Gupta, Andrea Kern, Christopher Peacocke, Susanna Schellenberg and Crispin Wright—is followed by several critical comments, to which the lead contributor then replies. The volume closes with an extended debate on perceptual epistemology between Annalisa Coliva, Anil Gupta and Crispin Wright.

Given the wide range of questions discussed, and the stark differences in the perspectives, concerns, motivations, prior commitments and outlooks of the lead contributors and discussants, it is no surprise that the volume before us covers a lot of ground, touching on such diverse topics as the nature of perceptual content, the epistemic internalism/externalism debate, epistemological disjunctivism, knowledge-first epistemology, perception-first philosophy of mind, skepticism about the external world, the logic of empirical inquiry, etc. Nevertheless, at the same time, the different contributions and criticisms as a whole are in constant communication with each other, making for a unified volume, richly-packed with lively debate on common themes. To illustrate this, we may foreshadow that Peacocke's and Kern's contributions, e.g., both embrace the thought that perception and judgment have the same kind of content, while disagreeing sharply over their other relations. Kern's and Schellenberg's contributions, in turn, both stress the importance of perception (as opposed to hallucination), knowledge (as opposed to mere justification), and perceptual capacities for the understanding of empirical rationality. At the same time, the contributions differ greatly over the nature of each of these and about their inter-relations. Schellenberg's and Gupta's contributions both agree over the falsity of epistemological disjunctivism, the importance of the subjective dimension of sensory experience, and the presence of mind-independent particulars to the perceiver's mind; while disagreeing sharply over the structure of evidence and empirical justification. Gupta, Wright and (in the extended debate) Coliva then join hands in taking a critical stance towards certain Knowledge-First approaches, while also taking very different approaches (pairwise) to the topic of skepticism about the external world. Finally, all contributions struggle with the central problem of articulating the distinct epistemic roles of the internal and introspectable states of the inquiring subject, on the one hand, and the external and non-introspectable mind-independent items that the subject means to inquire after, on the other hand. All contributors explore this central problem, but each will recommend a distinct way of making progress on it.

1.1 Anil Gupta's Reformed Empiricism

Anil Gupta's Reformed Empiricism (2006, 2019a, b; this volume) sets aside the naturalist inquiry into conscious experience's place in the natural world, in order to chart a novel vision of experience's role in reasoning and rationality. This novel vision is revisionary: Its account of conscious experience rivals both intentionalism and naïve realism, and its account of empirical rationality rivals both foundationalism and coherentism (along with large swaths of contemporary epistemology). Along the way, Reformed Empiricism develops new ideas about real versus derivative ontologies, the content and application of empirical terms, the logic of empirical dialectic, and the way the view can be situated relative to the naturalist inquiry it sets aside.

The roots of Reformed Empiricism's revisions lie perhaps in three core ideas. The first is the "hypothetical given": According to Gupta, the given in an experience is the total rational contribution of the experience to the subject's overall "view" of the world; where such a view is understood to include the subjects' beliefs, the propositions she more broadly accepts, her conception of self and world, and her way of "linking" possible experiences with judgments. Reformed Empiricism's first core idea is that the given in an experience is hypothetical. Roughly put, this means that an experience alone cannot confer rationality to ordinary perceptual judgments. Instead, the total rational contribution of an experience to the subject's view consists in the fact that the experience can confer rationality to transitions from a subject's view to the subject's judgments. What can confer rationality to ordinary perceptual judgments are the following two together—first, the subject's experience, and second, the subject's view being of the appropriate kind (and, in particular, the relevant part of the view itself being rational). Gupta's books argue for this view over Hume's empiricism, Sellars' coherentism, Russell's acquaintance theory, and much of contemporary epistemology.

Reformed empiricism's second core idea is "dual-component presentationalism". This is a conception of conscious experience on which experiences present the subject's consciousness with worldly items, which in turn manifest appearances to subject's consciousness. The conception is "dual-component", since not only are presentation and manifestation distinct; but the items presented are themselves distinct from the appearances manifested. Although dual-component presentationalism insists that any conscious experience presents some complex of items to the subject's consciousness, its conception of presentation is both liberal and minimal. It is liberal, since it allows that we might be presented with universals, particulars, facts, events and processes, regardless of whether they are internal or external to us, or of whether they are physical or mental. It is also minimal, since it stresses that presentation is not acquaintance, and that one can be presented with an item while lacking even the capacity to think about it. Furthermore, the relation between presented items and manifested appearances is complex: a single presented item can, in different perceptual circumstances, manifest different appearances to a subject's consciousness; and multiple distinct presented items can manifest identical appearances to a subject's consciousness. In his works, Gupta argues for this view over

both simple intentionalism and naïve realism, and discusses objections from the transparency of experience.

Reformed empiricism's third core idea is its account of the relationship between the hypothetical given and dual-component presentationalism. The account begins with the equivalence principle, stating that if the total appearances manifested in two experiences are identical (i.e., if the experiences are subjectively identical), then the experiences make equivalent total rational contributions to their respective subject's views (i.e., the given in each of them is equivalent to the given in the other). Equivalence here is not identity. Rather, experiences that make equivalent total rational contributions are experiences such that whenever one of them renders rational a transition from view v to judgment J, the other renders rational a transition from v to a judgment that is a *counterpart* of J's. Underlying this equivalence is a certain view of the role of appearances in cognition: Experiences in which identical total appearances are manifested can prompt the application of terms whose connotations—i.e., whose tendencies to be applied on the prompting of appearances—are identical (relative to a given view v). Because the connotations are identical (relative to v), the terms can be applied with equal rationality (relative to v), leading to equally rational transitions to counterpart judgments. Gupta relies on these ideas in explicating the distinctive logical features of phenomenological judgments, while arguing that these features in no way suggest that phenomenological judgments have a foundational role in epistemology.

In the present volume, Gupta's views of experience and its rational role come under close scrutiny by several commentators. Saran, Tang, Chirimuuta and Coliva all find dual-component presentationalism problematic. Saran worries that Gupta's liberal conception of presentation and appearances introduces a veil of perception, thus imperiling our cognitive contact with the world. The exchange between Tang and Gupta is shaped by Tang's contention that dual-component presentationalism unduly imposes a sharp separation between experience and intentionality. Chirimuuta's concerns are founded upon diverse examples which show dependence of experience on beliefs and perceptual training that Gupta's account will purportedly have difficulties dealing with. Coliva challenges Reformed Empiricism's basic claims to explanatory superiority over alternative views, questioning Gupta's accounts of phenomenology, perceptual error, and rational revision of views. The hypothetical given comes under scrutiny in contributions by Chirimuuta, Masrour and Hong. Chirimuuta argues that the hypothetical given cannot accommodate pluralism and contingency characteristic of scientific practice. Gupta's discussion with Masrour arises from Masrour's objection that the hypothetical given falls prey to an argument in *Conscious Experience* that is meant to undermine the view's major opponent— the propositional given. Finally, Hong argues that Reformed Empiricism requires a theory of truth to be put in place.

1.2 Andrea Kern's Knowledge View of Perception

Kern (2016, 2019; this volume) defends the Knowledge View of Perception. On this view, to perceive is to know, in a certain mode, how things are. Thus, individual perceptions are not episodes which fall short of knowledge, and which (when things go well) merely enable us to acquire perceptual knowledge through some further act. Equally, individual bits of perceptual knowledge are neither composed of separable experiences and judgments, nor are constituted by a judgment that is somehow appropriately related to an experience. Instead, any perception is itself always already a bit of perceptual knowledge.

Kern develops the Knowledge View of Perception by describing a single capacity—call it "the self-conscious capacity for perceptual knowledge"—which can only be possessed by creatures equipped with reason. This capacity admits of being exercised either perfectly or imperfectly. When the capacity is exercised perfectly, its exerciser enjoys a single episode which is at once both a perception and perceptual knowledge. Furthermore, the episode is self-conscious, in that the exerciser knows the episode to be one of knowledge of a perceived fact. When the capacity is exercised imperfectly, however, its exerciser may well neither enjoy an episode of perceptual knowledge, nor know that she does not enjoy such an episode. Additionally, the exerciser need not be having a single episode which is both an experience and a judgment. Rather, it is possible for her to have two distinct episodes—an illusory experience, as well as a separate judgment.

But why believe we possess a capacity with these features? Kern explains that this is the only way to hold on to the idea that perception is a capacity which can help equip us with perceptual knowledge of material objects in space and time. More specifically, she argues that it is untenable to think both that perception can help equip us with perceptual knowledge, and accept the "two-capacity view"—on which perceptual knowledge involves two distinct capacities: one for states that merely enable perceptual knowledge, and another that relies on the former states to create perceptual knowledge.

Kern's argument against the two-capacities view is rich, detailed, and succinct. It begins by noting that the view can take two forms: one form on which the capacity for states that enable perceptual knowledge (call it "perception") can be specified independently of the capacity to rely on the former states to create perceptual knowledge (call it "perceptual judgment"), and a form on which this is not the case. With respect to the first form, Kern thinks that it must make perceptions into states which do not rule out that, for all the subject knows, perceived objects are otherwise than the subject judges them to be. If so, she reasons, perceptions do not enable consciousness of the truth of the judgments that the subject makes about perceived objects. She concludes that perceptions cannot explain why the subject makes certain perceptual judgments rather than others, which suggests that those perceptual judgments do not count as knowledge. With respect to the second form, Kern thinks that it must make perceptions into states that are not self-conscious by themselves, but that can become self-conscious in virtue of the subject's reflecting on them. If so, she reasons,

perceptions cannot by themselves be the basis for the subject's knowing that she has perceptual knowledge. From this she concludes that they can also not be the basis for the subject's perceptual knowledge itself.

One upshot of rejecting the two-capacities view, and embracing Kern's own Knowledge View, is that we gain a picture on which perception is a remarkably perfect achievement of reason: It is conclusively successful, since it amounts to an awareness of the truth of a judgment. It is self-conscious, since in perceiving that p one knows that one perceives that p. And finally, as Kern notes, it is self-based, since the perception cited in truly saying "I know that p because I see that p" is itself a bit of knowledge.

Our commentators' discussions with Kern bring the Knowledge View and its relation to the two-capacities approach into sharper focus. Brewer, Sosa and Rosenhagen each scrutinize parts of Kern's argument against the two-capacities views, expressing doubts about its success on mutually independent grounds. Demircioglu attempts to put pressure on the Knowledge View by articulating as a motivation for two-capacities approaches the possibility that the same perceptual experiences can occur both in cases in which they enable acquisition of knowledge and in cases in which they do not. Kern's positive case for the Knowledge View then comes under scrutiny in her exchange with Kumar, which centers on the gradual acquisition of the capacity for perceptual knowledge. The Knowledge View itself draws Beck's and Tegtmeyer's attention. Beck objects to Kern by arguing that the acts of acquiring perceptual knowledge must, on the Knowledge View, turn out to be reckless: since perceptual judgments, on Kern's view, do not have any pre-existing bases, agents are deprived of reasons to undertake them. A more sympathetic exploration of Kern's view results from Tegtmeyer's discussion. He proposes a way for the Knowledge View to accommodate a kind of case that two-capacities theorists could put forth as problematic for Kern. The case in question concerns instances of current actualization of a potential for perceptual knowledge that was acquired at an earlier time.

1.3   Christopher Peacocke's Eirenic Position

Christopher Peacocke's "Two Kinds of Explanation and Their Significance" advances two major points. The first is that a distinction should be drawn between two kinds of explanation of a wide range of cognitive phenomena, including perception and emotional states. One kind of explanation invokes representational vehicles without appealing to their representational contents. In Peacocke's marquee example, the updating of one's conception of the layout of surrounding space that occurs upon a 30° shift in one's orientation can be explained by citing gradual changes in some magnitude in the mind-brain, together with an appropriate special science law. The representational state that comes about upon the 30° rotation can be explained as caused by gradual change in the relevant magnitude sensitive to such bodily movement. We need not explain the shift in representational content that has thus occurred by invoking contents of either the state prior to the shift in orientation or the one that

comes about upon the completion of the shift. Rather, Peacocke proposes, an adequate explanation can rely solely on content vehicles and their properties (together with an appropriate special science law). The other kind of explanation invokes representational contents specifically. In the case of 30° rotation, the explanation of the resulting state would involve a representation of the total angle of rotation and a computation on representational contents of perceptual states prior to the rotation. It is Peacocke's contention that there are numerous instances where empirical evidence suggests that the first kind of explanation is preferable to the second kind. Peacocke further illustrates the distinction using a variety of examples and underwrites it by drawing on a number of instances of apparent content-based explanations (i.e., explanation of the second kind) in which explananda are available that are not in fact content-structured.

The second major point of the paper is that the distinction between the two types of explanation has an impact on the discussion concerning conceptual and nonconceptual content of perception. Peacocke fleshes out a position—the so-called Eirenic position—that promises to employ the distinction in order to facilitate a reconciliation between the proponents of the two conceptions of perceptual content. With Peacocke's distinction on board, we can observe that a significant domain of concept-involving states can be explained without having to resort to notions characteristic of the level of belief, such as reasons or judgments. Rather than posit that there are conceptual and nonconceptual contents, Peacocke proposes that the recognition of two kinds of explanation uncovers a middle path: a single kind of content can be ascribed to perception and to states and events that are commonly assigned conceptually structured contents, such as beliefs and judgments. More specifically, on Peacocke's Eirenic position the modes or presentation that feature in the content of perception are the very same modes of presentation that can feature in the contents of judgments (Thesis 1, p. 170). These modes of presentation are individuated by their fundamental reference rules (a notion developed in Peacocke's earlier work, e.g., Peacocke 2014, 2019a, b), i.e., conditions that make something a referent of a mode of presentation (Thesis 2, p. 170). Peacocke further elaborates the Eirenic position by offering several of its key tenets, including the claim that a uniform notion of predication and structure of correctness conditions applies to the contents of perceptions and the contents of judgments (Thesis 4, p. 173), and the claim that the same mode of presentation can feature in the perceptual states of both humans and non-human animals (Thesis 3, p. 173). The elaboration of the Eirenic position helps Peacocke situate it in relation to important theories in the area, such as those defended by John McDowell and Tyler Burge, noting certain areas of agreement that Peacocke's earlier stance would not allow for. For instance, note that Theses 1 and 2 allow for a reconciliation with elements of McDowell's position. The sameness of content across perceptual states and judgments is one point of agreement, while the other concerns Peacocke's commitment to fundamental reference rules being the individuators of contents. Once this latter claim is endorsed, it becomes possible to account for the grasp of concept such as *square* solely in terms of subject's relation to experiences of things as square. No explanations in terms of nonconceptual contents are required, and this is where the Eirenic position should meet McDowell's approval.

A diverse set of comments occasions a searching discussion of Peacocke's proposal in the chapters that follow. On the one hand, questions and concerns are raised about the very distinction between the two kinds of explanation. Hill worries that the way the distinction is articulated reveals Peacocke's commitment to the view that an important range of representational contents is logically structured, which Hill finds problematic. Conner's comments bring into focus the question of the relevance of Peacocke's distinction for the understanding of different kinds of modes of presentation, while Epstein challenges the motivation for Peacocke's claim that explanations in terms of representational vehicles are preferable, in the examples under consideration, to explanations in terms of representational contents. On the other hand, commentators probe Peacocke's elaboration of the Eirenic position. The exchange with McDowell zeroes in on the thesis that the perceptions we share with non-human animals are the same perceptions that make perceptual judgments reasonable—a point on which Peacocke and McDowell disagree, despite the rapprochement between their positions. A related issue is the major concern of Sedivy's comments: she argues that Peacocke's claim that modes of presentation are individuated by fundamental reference rules restricts too much the range of items that animals can see. Gupta objects to Eirenic position's Thesis 1, motivated by his skepticism of the claim that modes of presentation feature in perceptual judgments. The question of how to understand the relation between the structure of perceptions' and judgments' contents and the structure of their correctness conditions provides Rubner with an opportunity to explore certain areas of friction between Peacocke's and Burge's positions.

1.4   Susanna Schellenberg's Capacitism

Susanna Schellenberg's Capacitism (2013, 2016a, b, 2018; this volume) is a major new approach to theorizing about perceptual experience, rivaling both representationalism (which makes representations the cornerstone of its account of experience's phenomenal and epistemic features) and relationalism (which makes the acquaintance relation the cornerstone of its account of experience's phenomenal and epistemic features). According to Capacitism, perceptual capacities are the cornerstone: Perceptual experiences are constituted by their subjects' employment of perceptual capacities, and these perceptual capacities are explanatorily fundamental. Capacitism holds that it is because we employ perceptual capacities that our conscious perceptions have representational content, phenomenal character, and epistemic force.

Although they are explanatorily fundamental, Capacitism offers a richly developed conception of perceptual capacities: The capacities function to discriminate and single out mind-independent particulars (e.g., objects, events, property-instances) of differing types, and they are individuated in terms of the particulars with respect to which they so function. The functions in question here are natural functions (i.e., interpretation-independent ones), but they need not be grounded in the (phylogenetic

or ontogenetic) history of the subject possessing them, nor need they be reliable. Still, the capacities are physically- and informationally-based repeatable capacities, and a subject possesses any one of them to the extent that, if the subject were perceptually related to a particular of the capacity-individuating type under favorable conditions, the subject would be in a position to discriminate and single out that particular. Note that this does not entail that perceptual capacities discriminate and single out relevant particulars whenever they are employed. On the contrary, Capacitism holds that perceptual capacities are fallible—they can be employed and yet fail to fulfill their function. In fact, whenever a perceptual capacity is employed without a particular of the appropriate kind being discriminated and singled out, the employment constitutes an illusion or a hallucination. Whenever a perceptual capacity is employed and a particular of the appropriate kind is discriminated and singled out, the employment constitutes a perception. But the cases of perception, on the one hand, and illusion and hallucination, on the other hand, are not on a par. According to Capacitism, cases of illusion and hallucination, in which a perceptual capacity does not fulfill its function, are metaphysically less basic than cases of perception, in which the capacity does fulfill its function.

To illustrate how Capacitism puts these perceptual capacities to explanatory work, consider its account of the epistemic force of perceptual experiences. According to the view, perceptual experiences provide us with phenomenal evidence whenever we are perceiving, hallucinating, or undergoing an illusion. Only when we are perceiving, however, do perceptual experiences additionally provide us with factive evidence. Capacitism's account of why perceptual experiences provides us with phenomenal evidence appeals to the function of the capacities employed in having the experiences. More accurately, because perceptual capacities function to discriminate and single out certain types of mind-independent particulars, there is metaphysical priority to their employments in perceptions over those in illusions or hallucinations. This metaphysical priority entails that one can give an analysis of the perceptual capacities employed in illusions or hallucinations only by appealing to their role in perceptions. So there is also an explanatory priority to their employments in perceptions over their employments in illusions or hallucinations. These two priorities—the metaphysical and the explanatory—suggest that any employment of a perceptual capacity (whether in a perception, illusion or hallucination) is systematically linked to those particulars which belong to the type that the capacity functions to discriminate and single out. But if an employment of a perceptual capacity is systematically linked to particulars of a certain type, then the employment makes it *prima facie* rational to accept that a particular of that type is present. This suggests that perceptual experiences provide us with phenomenal evidence.

Capacitism's account of why perceptual experiences provide us with factive evidence is closely related. The view says that in cases of perception, the capacities employed successfully fulfil their function, and discriminate and single out particulars of the appropriate types. Therefore, it holds that in cases of perception, there is an ideal link between the perceptual state and environmental particulars of those types. Due to the link's being ideal, perceptions provide factive evidence, which make it more rational than phenomenal evidence to accept that the particular perceived is

present. Thus, as Capacitism has it, perceivers are in a better evidential position than those who have illusions or hallucinations.

The discussion in comments and replies covers each of Schellenberg's major claims to explanatory fundamentality of perceptual capacities. Cheng queries the very notion of fundamentality operative in Schellenberg's proposal. Several exchanges are devoted to the issue of the relation of capacities and representational content: Lyons questions the contention that capacities are properly viewed as more fundamental than content, and Miracchi outlines an alternative capacitist position, one that dispenses with representational content. The issue of the epistemic force of experience within the capacitist proposal receives an extended treatment. Beck presses the point that Capacitism's ability to adequately explain the epistemic force of experience is undermined by Capacitism's reliability-independent conception of natural function. Marushak's and Miracchi's criticisms focus on Schellenberg's thesis that experience provides evidence thanks to systematic linkages between perceptual states and perceived particulars. Finally, Cahen and Vuletić challenge Capacitism's treatment of the phenomenal character of experience, outlining, respectively, worries related to the phenomena of perceptual variance and shifted spectra.

1.5   Crispin Wright's Two Conceptions of Perceptual Justification

In "Perceptual Justification–Two Conceptions Compared," Crispin Wright takes aim at the debate between the internalist and externalist accounts of justification of perceptual beliefs. In doing so, Wright deals with two major philosophical topics: the challenge posed by skeptical scenarios and the analogy between broadly ethical values and doxastic values.

The assumption at work in Wright's paper is that there is a multiplicity of values of belief analogous to a multiplicity of ethical values. In the latter case, there are multiple values of agency. There are values that concern the goals of actions: it is good to act in ways that bring about overall happiness, or are just, etc.; and there are values that concern acting well even if the goal of action is not achieved: it is good to act compassionately, or bravely, etc. A similar distinction can be drawn with respect to belief, according to Wright. We can recognize values of the epistemic product: for instance, we can deem it good to form beliefs that are true, or knowledgeable; and we can recognize values of doxastic management that are concerned with rationality, such as coherence and proportionality, and which need not be straightforwardly viewed as derived from values of epistemic product.

Wright first considers an internalist conception of doxastic justification. It is a view on which perceptual beliefs are justified by a defeasible, quasi-inferential transition from a state of "apparent perceptual experience to a conclusion about the external world" (p. XX). Its looking to you as if P, for example, defeasibly justifies your belief that P. This internalist model, in Wright's view, faces two significant

problems. It is notoriously difficult to spell out just which contents are appropriate for specifically perceptual justification. But even if that question is resolved and we settle on a type of content that is adequate for the required role—say, *recognitional* contents constituted by one or more demonstratives together with predicates and relations—Wright points out that an altogether different and ultimately more serious problem arises. To set up the problem, Wright draws a distinction between *props* and *lemmas.* Both props and lemmas are *authenticity-conditions* for cognitive projects, where a cognitive project consists of a thesis and a method for forming a view about the thesis. More specifically, authenticity-conditions are negations of underminers for a particular cognitive project. The key difference between lemmas and props concerns whether they require positive evidence of satisfaction in order to secure trust in the outcome of the cognitive project. Lemmas are authenticity conditions that do require such evidence of satisfaction, while props do not. To use a simple example, consider a project of determining some experimental result. Certain authenticity conditions—lemmas—will stand in need of antecedent reasons to believe that they are fulfilled: one needs, for instance, grounds on which one determines that the equipment required for the experiment is working properly. Other authenticity conditions—props—require no such reasons: for instance, in order to negate the underminer according to which lab staff is engaged in a nefarious plot to sabotage the experiment one need not engage in a process of securing reasons to think that no such conspiracy is afoot. Wright argues for an important thesis within this setting. In his view, no cognitive project can rely on lemmas as its sole authenticity conditions. If all authenticity conditions for a cognitive project were lemmas, each authenticity condition would require a cognitive project in order to determine its veracity. This would generate a regress of cognitive projects. So instead we should conclude that some of authenticity conditions must be props. The problem facing the internalist conception of perceptual justification, then, is that the way it models perceptual justification is inadequate. The quasi-inferential model of perceptual justification makes no room for props. In Wright's view, the lesson to be drawn from these considerations is that we must acknowledge the role of at least some props in the case of perceptual justification. Wright's considered position is that certain general assumptions must be viewed as props in the case of perceptual justification. In order to justifiably lay claim to a perceptual judgment that P, we must, for instance, back up our belief in the claim that the experience in which it seems to us as if P is an instance of genuine contact with mind-independent environment by invoking the essential role of such beliefs in the very concept of rational inquiry.

Wright next considers an externalist conception of perceptual justification. In order to zero in on a notion of a specifically *perceptual* justification, Wright distinguishes between beliefs formed just by perceptual means but justified on independent grounds, and beliefs justified by perception. Generic externalist conception of justified belief as generated by a reliable (though not exceptionless) method cannot, in Wright's view, underwrite proper perceptual justification. Externalist conception of perceptual justification requires some pre-doxastic psychological state which registers an appearance of a particular set of circumstances; Wright calls this state *registration state*. Prior commitments require the externalist to view registration states

as dyadic world-involving states. It is common in the externalist literature to bring out as the view's significant advantage that it deals particularly successfully with the threat of skepticism because of this grounding of perceptual belief in this kind of a world-involving dyadic state. Once such grounding is adopted, a familiar line of thought then leads the externalist to metaphysical disjunctivism and to well-known difficulties accounting for cases in which perceptual appearances do not accurately reflect the environment in which the subject—say, the subject in New Evil Demon Scenario (NEDS)—finds herself. Wright's main complaint against the externalist is that they are forced into saying awkward things about the victim of NEDS. Rather than say that the NEDS subject's perceptual beliefs in the bad case are justified, the externalist can at most say that the subject is *excusable*, or beyond reproach, for their mistaken belief; the subject does something wrong, but can be excused for doing so.

NEDS brings out nicely what is at stake in the internalism–externalism debate. On the internalist conception of perceptual justification, the victim of NEDS is justified in their beliefs just as in the corresponding good case. On the externalist conception, the victim of NEDS is merely exonerated for their mistaken beliefs. Wright points out that these verdicts imply different background values at work. The internalist would say that the subject in NEDS would flout values of rationality—say, maximization of coherence of one's experiences and one's beliefs—should they to fail to respond to their apparent perceptual states as genuine. The externalist would say that belief-formation that the internalist deems to be justified actually places the subject of NEDS in a position to violate the value of maximizing true beliefs regarding their environment. Wright concludes that whether we judge that the NEDS subject is justified or excusable will depend on what relative weight we ascribe to the values of epistemic product and the values of doxastic management, that is, whether we take the values of doxastic management to be merely instrumental in the process of attaining values of the epistemic product or not. However, this is precisely what the disagreement between externalism and internalism is all about. We cannot make progress in adjudicating this debate on the basis of skeptical scenarios like NEDS, despite the externalist's claim to the contrary.

Wright's paper prompts a well-focused debate centered mostly on epistemic value pluralism and on disjunctivist alternatives to the internalist and externalist accounts of justification discussed therein. The question whether it is appropriate to cash out the debate between internalism and externalism in terms of relative weight assigned to different epistemic values is addressed in Wright's exchanges with Smithies and Kovach. Berinstein's comments bring out the following worry: if the issue of relative priority of epistemic values comes about only as a consequence of skeptical thought experiments like NEDS, it then may well not be advisable to view these values as being engaged in a contest. Neta proposes an attempt to break the internalism/ externalism impasse by sketching a disjunctivist position which remedies respective deficiencies of the internalist and externalist views. But is there really an impasse at all? According to Sethi, it might not be so, as long as we recognize that an internalist (externalist) account of justification need not be paired with an internalist (externalist) account of experience; once this recognition sinks in, we can acknowledge that metaphysical disjunctivism fares better than either internalism or externalism. The

question of viability of such a disjunctivist proposal is attended to in this volume's instalment of the storied debate between McDowell and Wright.

1.6 Coliva, Gupta and Wright's Debate on Skepticism and Perceptual Belief

The final part of the book is devoted to a debate between Annalisa Coliva, Anil Gupta and Crispin Wright. Prompted by a discussion at the PEER 2021 conference, the three authors engage in a series of extended exchanges concerning the nature of justification of perceptual beliefs and the threat of skeptical challenges.

The participants share some common ground. They all take it that the role of experience in providing justification for perceptual beliefs is always conditioned on certain elements of a subject's background view. Dogmatism about perceptual justification does not, in view of the three authors, get things right when it comes to the *architecture* of perceptual justification: an episode of perceptual experience cannot alone provide even defeasible, *prima facie* justification for perceptual beliefs.

The first major disagreement concerns the question of which elements of our background view are required for perceptual justification. Coliva and Wright take it that something like "heavyweight hinges" must be in place: i.e., propositions like "my sense organs work mostly reliably", or "external object are, by and large, as they appear to be", etc. Gupta, on the other hand, thinks that hinges are not included in the part of the antecedent view on whose epistemic status the justification of perceptual beliefs depends.

Suppose something like heavyweight hinges must be assumed for ordinary perceptual beliefs to be justified. Do these hinges themselves require further justification? Coliva and Wright offer different answers. According to Coliva's moderatism, hinges cannot be justified or warranted. This does not mean that they are void of any legitimacy. Coliva claims, and has elsewhere argued to this effect extensively, that hinge propositions are constitutive of epistemic rationality and of our basic epistemic practices, which provides them with good rational standing. Wright, on the other hand, is of the view that hinges are in need of justification. This does not mean that we should expect them to be grounded by evidence. Instead, Wright argues that epistemic agents and their attitudes towards hinges are non-evidentially warranted: we are entitled to take it that such propositions are true. In the course of the debate, Coliva and Wright hash out several strands of argumentation bearing on specific advantages and potential weaknesses of their respective positions. Their discussion covers questions such as whether hinge propositions are apt for substantive correspondence with reality; whether non-evidential entitlements are best assigned to propositions or to attitudes taken towards propositions; which propositions should be included among hinges if they are in fact constitutive of epistemic rationality.

Why think that heavyweight hinges must be assumed in order to rationally ground our ordinary perceptual beliefs? The discussion isolates problems raised by skeptical

scenarios as the fundamental motivation for the reliance on hinges. According to Wright, if an agent is called upon to provide the grounds for a perceptual belief such as "That bird is a cardinal," any attempt at an answer can be followed up by further questioning and the ensuing dialogue can always be pushed to the point where hinges will have to be invoked. Gupta finds this motivation problematic and voices several concerns. For one thing, Gupta argues that the forensic examination of the sort Wright describes can in fact be passed without any invoking of the hinges. Furthermore, Gupta observes that hinges are equally—if not more—threatened by skepticism as ordinary perceptual beliefs. Gupta's criticisms of hinge epistemology are reflective of his attitude towards Cartesian skepticism. He finds that skeptical challenges of the Cartesian kind are not too worrisome. The mere raising of the possibility of error does not put our ordinary perceptual beliefs in peril, and we are safe to deflect the skeptic's attack by offering a dialectical response: where appropriate, we need only point out that the skeptic's argument is erroneous or question-begging. The real threat of skepticism, according to Gupta, issues from arguments that rely on the propositional perceptual given and that result in the endorsement of Cartesian conceptions of experience. As a remedy to this kind of skepticism—and for other important reasons as well, as elaborated in his contributions to this volume and elsewhere—Gupta recommends his preferred accounts of experience and its rational role.

This leads to the second major topic of the debate—the question of appropriate attitudes towards skeptical challenges of the kind that fuel the forensic examination. Coliva and Wright take Gupta's attitude to be too dismissive. Wright believes that the best skeptical arguments should be treated as paradoxes, which would make the dialectical response inappropriate. Instead, what is called for is a straightforward solution of the paradox. One way of doing so would be to argue, as Wright does in some of his writings, that justification can be non-evidential as well as evidential, thus opening up the possibility of rejecting the skeptic's argument. Coliva, on the other hand, considers Wright's attitude towards skepticism to be too permissive. In her view, we should not go as far as agreeing with the skeptic, as Wright does, that justification of ordinary perceptual beliefs requires heavyweight hinges to be justified as well (although non-evidentially, as Wright would have it). Coliva proposes a diagnostic attitude towards skeptical challenges, i.e., an approach which appreciates the merits of skepticism and points out its errors without conceding that heavyweight hinge propositions are in need of justification.

This highly engaging debate offers a number of additional worthwhile insights and displays the many virtues of its form. The three authors, responding to each other's remarks, create a dynamic text that probes deeply the major issues of empirical rationality, providing an instructive example of how such exchanges could further philosophical investigation.

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Part I
Anil Gupta's Reformed Empiricism

Chapter 2
Reformed Empiricism, in Brief

Check for updates

Anil Gupta

Reformed Empiricism is a position on empirical cognition that I have been developing over the past two decades or so. I provided a detailed exposition of this position in my book *Conscious Experience: A Logical Inquiry* (Gupta 2019; henceforth *CE*). In an earlier book, *Empiricism and Experience* (Gupta 2006; henceforth *E&E*), I sketched a core fragment of the position, but deferred a fuller development until I could be sure of the stability of the core. I will draw on these two books in this brief restatement of the principal tenets of the position.[1]

Central to Reformed Empiricism is its account of experience and its relationship to thought. I should stress at the outset that the primary aim of this account is to help us better understand certain logical aspects of empirical cognition, aspects pertaining to ***empirical reasoning*** and the paradigmatic context within which it occurs, ***empirical dialectic***. The account aims to address questions such as these:

> When is an empirical concept legitimate? When is a piece of empirical reasoning correct from the logical point of view? Which challenges are appropriate to an empirical claim and, more generally, to our view of things? And what kinds of transformations can empirical dialectic, properly conducted, bring about in our view?

Empirical cognition is a multi-faceted topic, and my primary interest lies in its logical facet. There are equally legitimate inquiries into empirical cognition other

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[1] The formulations of some of the ideas in *E&E* are highly abstract (e.g., that of the hypothetical given), and I prefer the more concrete reformulations provided in *CE*. Nevertheless, *CE* does not entirely supersede *E&E*. The earlier book provides more detailed treatments of some topics than those found in *CE*. Thus, Chap. 2 of *E&E* provides a fuller discussion of classical empiricism; Chap. 4, of convergence; and Chap. 6, of some features of Reformed Empiricism.

I use **bold italics** to mark important concepts and ideas, both here and in the replies below. The reader will find detailed explanations of most of these items in *CE* or *E&E* or both.

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