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JUDGMENTAL PERCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS
FACTIVE GROUNDS:
A NEW INTERPRETATION AND DEFENSE OF
EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISJUNCTIVISM

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Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Edinburgh
2018

Declaration

I, Kegan Shaw, hereby declare that this thesis represents my own composition and work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Date

Abstract

This thesis offers a fresh interpretation and defense of epistemological disjunctivism about perceptual knowledge. I adopt a multilevel approach according to which perceptual knowledge on one level can enjoy factive rational support provided by perceptual knowledge of the same proposition on a different level. Here I invoke a distinction Ernest Sosa draws between ‘judgmental’ and ‘merely functional’ belief to articulate what I call the *bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge*. The view that results is a form of epistemological disjunctivism about perceptual knowledge specifically at the higher judgmental level, layered over a straightforward externalism about perceptual knowledge at the lower merely functional level.

The first chapter orients the reader to epistemological disjunctivism— with particular emphasis on the ‘reflective epistemological disjunctivism’ defended by Duncan Pritchard with inspiration from John McDowell. Here I review the arguments for thinking such a proposal true, as well as highlight some problems and three emerging challenges for the view: what I call the internalist challenge, the new access challenge(s), and the ‘new evil genius’ challenge. These challenges largely inspire the chapters to follow.

In the second chapter I present the positive proposal: a fresh interpretation of epistemological disjunctivism in terms of perceptual knowledge at the specifically judgmental level. I argue that this is a modification that epistemological disjunctivists should adopt since it inoculates their view against the internalist challenge: the challenge of explaining why perception should provide one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons for belief.

In the third chapter I motivate the view further in connection with the more familiar ‘basis problem’ for epistemological disjunctivism. I argue that this approach supports a unique strategy for solving that problem: one that is consistent *both* with what is known as ‘the entailment’ thesis and the thought that we can reduce perceptual knowledge to a kind of rationally supported belief.

In the fourth chapter I move to playing defense. I defend the proposal against the so-called ‘new evil genius’ challenge. This is the challenge to explain why subjects in pairs of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ cases can seem equally justified for sustaining their perceptual beliefs. I argue that what we are being sensitive to here, rather, is the fact that both subjects can be equally epistemically responsible and/or reasonable for believing what they do. Before concluding this chapter I also offer an error theory.

In the fifth chapter I defend the proposal against the new access challenges raised in chapter one. These alleged challenges for epistemological disjunctivism arise specifically for versions of *reflective* epistemological disjunctivism that hold that one’s rational support for perceptual beliefs is not only factive but reflectively accessible as well.

Rather than address the challenges head on, I try to dislodge the thought they depend upon—viz., that one’s factive rational support for perceptual beliefs is reflectively accessible to the subject. Here I argue that the reflective accessibility of one’s factive rational support is actually a wheel turning idly in the debate with the underdetermination-based radical sceptic—so that we can simply drop it without consequence. The result is an epistemological disjunctivism that is immune to access problems. I then offer a final summary and conclude.

At the end of this thesis I have attached an appendix, which is an excursion into religious epistemology and an exploration of a form of *religious* epistemological disjunctivism. Here I apply the epistemological disjunctivist insight to the case of *religious perception* in order to defend the idea that one can offer independent rational support for theistic belief by appealing to religious beliefs that are justified on the basis of religious experiences. This appendix chapter is in keeping with the general spirit of the thesis insofar as it seeks to developed epistemological disjunctivism in new and fruitful directions.

Acknowledgements

I am very privileged to have had the opportunity to research this topic intensively for a PhD in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. I am enormously grateful, first and foremost, to God revealed through Jesus Christ, for His very many provisions in my life over the past four years: for directing my family's relocation to Edinburgh from overseas, providing us with a loving and eminently supportive Church community there, and for sustaining me in a good health throughout the course of my research. Second, I owe an enormous debt of grateful to my incredible wife Amanda, who quietly sacrificed a great deal in helping me to produce this thesis, and without whose support and encouragement it all would have been quite impossible (and much less fun). I am blessed beyond measure to have her on my team. Third, my sincerest thanks to Duncan Pritchard—whose very engaging work hooked me into epistemology in the first place—for providing exceedingly excellent supervision for this thesis, and for being quick to offer encouragement throughout and professional advice as needed. Thanks also to Martin Smith, Aidan McGlynn, and Adam Carter for reading through and providing very helpful feedback on earlier drafts of chapters, and for helpful discussion on relevant themes. Finally, I am grateful for having been able to work among a stellar postgraduate community at The University of Edinburgh. Thanks especially in this regard to friends Michel Croce, Giada Fratantonio, Matt Jope, Nina Poth, Lukas Schwengerer, and Silvan Wittwer.

Publications

This thesis incorporates material from the following publications.

Chapter Two

Shaw, K. (*forthcoming*). 'Epistemological Disjunctivism and the Internalist Challenge', *American Philosophical Quarterly*.

Chapter Three

Shaw, K. (*forthcoming*). 'The Bifurcated Conception of Perceptual Knowledge: A New Solution to the Basis Problem for Epistemological Disjunctivism', *Synthese*.

Chapter Four

Shaw, K. (2017). 'A Better Disjunctivist Response to 'The New Evil Genius' Challenge', *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 94.1, 101-125.

Appendix

Shaw, K. (2016). 'Religious Epistemological Disjunctivism', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79.3, 261-279

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Preface

Epistemological disjunctivism as it is commonly conceived can seem fairly outlandish from a familiar Cartesian point of view. Both externalists and internalists in epistemology are apt to subscribe to a familiar Cartesian dogma that says that one's radically deceived counterpart in the 'bad case' has *every reason*—or has the same level of rational support—that one has in the 'good case' for accepting one's perceptual beliefs (cf. Schonbaumsfeld 2016). After all it is thought that things *seem* or appear to your radically deceived counterpart just as they seem to you. But then doesn't this suggest that *seeming seemings* are the place to begin—that one's best reason for adopting a perceptual belief that *p* is something like the fact that one seems to see that *p*?

Epistemological disjunctivists will demur. They will remind us that appearances can be misleading, and that this can be true of one's basic perceptual reasons as for anything else. In fact the epistemological disjunctivist will maintain that part of what makes being 'radically deceived' so epistemically bad is that one is tricked into thinking that one has reasons for accepting ordinary perceptual beliefs that one doesn't in fact have—reasons that common sense suggests are the paradigmatic reasons for accepting ordinary perceptual beliefs in good cases.

Now *which* reasons these are is a matter of some controversy among epistemological disjunctivists. At the very least it seems to be agreed that these are *factive* reasons. Not because they consist of facts (although we will assume that throughout), but because they entail the truth of the ordinary 'everyday' external world propositions they give one rational support to believe. Compare John McDowell (1982) (1995), for instance, who thinks that when one perceptually knows that *p* one believes that *p* for the reason that one *sees that p* to be the case. If that is the case then since seeing that *p*

entails that p one's perceptual belief is rationally grounded only if what one believes is true.

Now if this is already beginning to seem like a radical or surprising thesis the epistemological disjunctivist will remind us that it only reflects plain common sense. For consider: no one who sees a tomato before them thinks that they have good reason to believe this because they only *seem* to see a tomato. Or at least arguably that is no one's *first* reaction; not before they meet a philosopher. On the contrary if for example you were to try and defend your belief that there is a tomato before you to a third party wouldn't you first want to cite reasons like "well, I can just see that there is a tomato before me"? The epistemological disjunctivist is quick to highlight that our ordinary thought and talk suggests that our basic perceptual reasons can be (as good as) factive reasons—which are precisely *not* the reasons the Cartesian picture has long suggested are the best we have.

Epistemological disjunctivism is most readily associated with the view defended by Duncan Pritchard with inspiration from John McDowell. Their brand of epistemological disjunctivism can seem even more radical yet. For it says that one can perceptually know that p because one believes that p for the reason that one sees that p —this reason being not only factive but *reflectively accessible* to the subject whose knowledge is in question. It is with this sort of view that we are largely concerned with in this project.

* * *

In this thesis I develop the sort of view that Pritchard defends in what I think is a new and fruitful direction by invoking a distinction between 'merely functional' and 'judgmental' perceptual belief (and knowledge). On the view I will defend one can enjoy perceptual knowledge at the judgmental level courtesy of rational support furnished by one's perceptual knowledge of the *same proposition* at the merely functional level. It is an epistemological

disjunctivism about distinctively judgmental perceptual knowledge, where this is kept distinct from the kind of knowledge one enjoys at the merely functional level.

I think that there are good reasons to pursue a development of Pritchard's view along these lines—two reasons in particular that I make a big deal about in this project.

First, an epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is inoculated against what I call and later motivate as *the internalist challenge*. It is a key component of Pritchard's view that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons—indeed factive and reflectively accessible reasons—for perceptual belief. This is meant to capture an important 'internalist' insight; something Pritchard clearly advertises as a virtue of his position. But recently it has emerged that Pritchard's epistemological disjunctivism may be in need of further motivation on this score. For instance, why should anyone want to throw their hat in with the internalist in thinking that it's because there is something that is the subject's reason for believing that p that she perceptually knows that p when she does. You can imagine a thoroughgoing externalist wanting to know. In other words it's hardly clear that there *actually is* some such internalist 'insight' worth accommodating in a theory of perceptual knowledge. Now while it is certainly open for epistemological disjunctivists like Pritchard to follow McDowell (2011) in emphasizing that it is with respect to *distinctively human* perceptual knowledge that epistemological disjunctivism makes its claims, this only raises the further question: what is it exactly about such distinctively human perceptual knowledge that lends itself to the relevant internalist interpretation? This is the internalist challenge. It challenges disjunctivists like Pritchard to vindicate the internalist intuitions they claim to do well to protect.

Epistemological disjunctivists have had little if anything to say in response to the internalist challenge. Importantly however I'll argue that this

challenge doesn't even begin to take hold if we reconceive epistemological disjunctivism along the lines of my positive proposal—that is, in terms of judgmental perceptual knowledge; a species of specifically judgmental belief. That is because, as I maintain, there is an independently well-motivated conception of judgmental belief according to which this *just is* something that involves motivating reasons. The result is that the epistemological disjunctivist no longer has extra explaining to do about why they side with the internalist in thinking that perception should provide one with knowledge by providing one with reasons for belief. After all so long as it is part of the nature of the target knowledge-apt belief that it involve one's believing something on the basis of a reason in this way, then epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge wears that explanation on its sleeve.

Not only that, I think that—secondly—an epistemological disjunctivism of the kind advanced here supports a novel solution to the so-called *basis problem* for epistemological disjunctivism. This is the problem of explaining how one could know that p on the rational basis of one's seeing that p —as the disjunctivist maintains—if seeing that p entails knowing that p on account of being the way in which one knows that p (i.e. 'the entailment thesis'). In order to manoeuvre around the problem Pritchard and others have tried to motivate rejecting the entailment thesis (or what we later call for perspicuity the S_wK thesis, or 'seeing as a way of knowing' thesis). By contrast I'll argue that epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge supports a different strategy for overcoming the basis problem—one that leaves the popular entailment thesis entirely intact. In particular, I will argue that once we integrate what I call the *bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge* then we can help ourselves to a picture on which one can perceptually know that p on the judgmental level on the rational basis of one's seeing that p without issue, and *even if* seeing that p entails knowing that p . As I argue, what is crucial here is that the perceptual knowledge that

seeing that p in entails is perceptual knowledge only on the merely functional level.

We will discover that while I am not the first to advance a form of epistemological disjunctivism that can be made consistent with the entailment thesis, our view is the first to be made consistent *both* with the entailment thesis and the thought that perceptual knowledge can be reduced to a kind of justified or rationally supported belief. We will see that this makes epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge unique insofar as it can be made consistent with the kind of reductive conception that Pritchard seems to be aiming at only *without* the apparent deficit of having to reject the thought that seeing that p is just a way of knowing that p .

* * *

That then is the positive proposal. Call it *epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge*: in paradigmatic cases of judgmental perceptual knowledge one knows that p in virtue of sustaining a perceptual judgment to the effect that p for the reason that one sees that p —where this factive reason is a way of knowing that p on the merely functional level. Potentially our proposal faces a number of new challenges that have arisen more recently for epistemological disjunctivism. In this thesis I endeavour to defend our positive proposal by confronting some of these challenges head on. Most important are the ‘New Evil Genius’ challenge and a flurry of new challenges surrounding the reflective accessibility component associated with popular presentations of epistemological disjunctivism.

Start with the new evil genius challenge. Like any epistemological disjunctivist view, ours entails that one’s reasons in the ‘good case’ are much better than the reasons one has in the corresponding ‘bad case’ (where one is radically deceived) for sustaining a given perceptual judgmental belief. For it goes without saying that if one is in the bad case and so is radically

deceived then one doesn't see anything at all, much less see *that* anything is the case. While things may certainly *seem* otherwise in the bad case, the lesson is not that one's basic perceptual reasons are something other than what common sense says they are. Rather according to the epistemological disjunctivist this only indicates that one can be fooled into thinking that one is in possession of factive reasons for sustaining perceptual judgments.

But this immediately creates a problem for our view and really *any* epistemological disjunctivist view—a problem that has yet to receive explicit treatment in this context. We can view the problem this way. Surely subjects in the bad case are in some sense *faultless* for sustaining perceptual judgments that *p* when they seem to see that *p*. And it seems implausible that this is only a brute fact about their situation. Cartesians can provide a straightforward explanation of this: a subject in the bad case has every reason a subject has in the corresponding good case for sustaining the relevant perceptual judgment (later on we call this the 'new evil genius' thesis). And that is why subjects in the bad case are faultless for sustaining their perceptual judgment in the relevant way. This line of explanation is clearly unavailable to the epistemological disjunctivist, however.

This is one way of getting at the 'new evil genius' challenge for epistemological disjunctivism—a challenge that we will tackle here. In so many words I argue that the disjunctivist can explain why subjects in the bad case are faultless or blameless for believing what they do without having to concede to the Cartesian that they have every reason one has in the good case for sustaining perceptual judgments. To think otherwise, I contend, is to confuse sustaining a judgment in a way that is epistemically *responsible* and/or *reasonable* with actually having good epistemic reasons for sustaining the judgment at issue. That much addresses the relevant 'first-order' problem. But a complete response to the new evil genius challenge should also address what I call the 'diagnostic' problem: the problem of explaining what then motivates the Cartesian (or 'classical internalist') to assimilate

epistemic responsibility and/or reasonability with actually having good reasons for sustaining perceptual judgments upon reflecting on the justification available in pairs of good and bad cases. Here I propose tentatively that this is rooted in a commitment on their part to provide a certain ‘vindicating’ conception of the rational support available for perceptual knowledge.

Lastly, I say something to address the flurry of recent challenges for epistemological disjunctivism to emerge in connection with the idea that one can have specifically *reflective access* to the fact that one sees that *p*. As I explain these new ‘reflective access’ challenges are slightly different from the more familiar ‘access problem’ for epistemological disjunctivism. What they all have in common, of course, is that they depend upon our incorporating a reflective accessibility condition in our presentation of epistemological disjunctivism. At the end of this thesis I say something to undercut the force of these challenges—in particular by offering reasons to suspect that we *need maintain* that factive reasons are reflectively accessible as opposed to non-reflectively (i.e. straightforwardly empirically) accessible. This opens the door to simply dropping the reflective accessibility component altogether, at which point any challenge that turns on that component simply evaporates.

I attempt to accomplish this through what may at first seem like a circuitous route. I embark upon an analysis of the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem, and in particular of Pritchard’s claim that his *reflective* epistemological disjunctivism is indispensable for overcoming that problem. What I hope to show in the end is that Pritchard is wrong about that—that we needn’t think that unless one enjoys reflective access to one’s factive reasons we cannot provide the sort of solution to the radical sceptical problem that Pritchard thinks we should be aiming for. But then, I suggest, this puts considerable pressure on the reflective accessibility component. For if in order to answer the radical sceptical challenge it isn’t necessary that one subscribe to rational support that is both factive *and reflectively accessible*

(as opposed to empirically accessible), then it can seem as though the reflective accessibility condition isn't doing much work at all in the theory. For this reason I conclude that at least for the time being it isn't clear that disjunctivists need subscribe to the reflective accessibility condition.

* * *

The thesis is divided into five chapters and an appendix. The first orients the reader to epistemological disjunctivism, providing what I think is a well-organized summary of the relevant literature. The second and third chapters introduce and then motivate epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge, first in connection with the internalist challenge and then with respect to the familiar basis problem for epistemological disjunctivism. The fourth and fifth chapters then serve to defend our positive proposal against challenges that have recently emerged for epistemological disjunctivism more generally, and which we have just now summarized. Chapter four confronts the new evil genius challenge. And chapter five discusses Pritchard's epistemological disjunctivism in connection with underdetermination-based radical scepticism in order to say something to defend our view against a flurry of new challenges that have emerged in connection with the idea that factive rational support can be accessible upon reflection alone. I then offer a concluding statement. In the appendix I make an excursion into religious epistemology. Here I explore the ramifications of a distinctively *religious* epistemological disjunctivism for the epistemology of ordinary theistic belief. My main goal here is to challenge the widespread assumption that since the 'theist in the street' is unaware of any potentially convincing arguments for theism he or she is not in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists. I make my case by defending a 'Moorean'-style proof for theism—a proof for the existence of God that parallels in structure G.E. Moore's original proof for the existence of

an external world. In making this defense I appeal to an epistemological disjunctivism about *religious* perceptual knowledge—which states that when one knows that God is manifesting Himself to one in a given way on the basis of a suitable religious experience one can enjoy factive and reflectively accessible rational support for this belief. The appendix is aligned well with the more general ambitions of this thesis—viz., to model how epistemological disjunctivism might be fruitfully developed in new directions.

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to Epistemological Disjunctivism

Introduction

This opening chapter orients the reader to epistemological disjunctivism, with a view toward pointing the way to the chapters that follow. Here is the plan. I begin by introducing epistemological disjunctivism in very general terms, before narrowing in to consider the specific version of the view at issue in this project. In the opening section I highlight some of the key differences among those who advance epistemological disjunctivist views in the literature, followed by my providing what I think is a helpful rubric for conceptualizing the relevant territory. The rest of the chapter targets the specific version of epistemological disjunctivism with which we are concerned in this project: that defended by Duncan Pritchard with inspiration from John McDowell. In the second section I consider the positive case for a view of this kind, before finally highlighting some problems and challenges for it. This opening chapter—more than providing a tour of the relevant literature—provides the reader with some helpful perspective on the topics we address later on.

§1 Introducing Epistemological Disjunctivism

Epistemological disjunctivism is usually understood as view about the rational support that can be made available for ordinary perceptual knowledge. In particular a disjunctivist will maintain that when one knows that something is so because one sees that it's the case, one can enjoy a kind of *factive* rational support for believing this that one would not enjoy if one were instead

merely hallucinating. For example John McDowell (1982) (1995) (2011) advances a view that entails that when one knows that there is a tomato before one on the basis of seeing it there one enjoys rational support for believing this that “puts one in position” to know it. For McDowell that is to say that one enjoys factive rational support comprised of one’s *seeing that* there is a tomato—‘factive’ insofar as seeing that there is a tomato entails that it’s true that there is a tomato. Notice that this is rational support that one could not possibly enjoy if it had only *seemed to one* that there is a tomato as a result of a hallucination. After all in absence of a tomato one cannot enjoy rational support that entails the presence of one. Very well. But what makes the position *disjunctivist*? Why does that locution apply?

1.1 What Is So ‘Disjunctivist’ About Epistemological Disjunctivism?

Let’s say that anything that is introspectively indistinguishable from an event of seeing that p is a visual experience that p . This means that visual experiences that p are neutral between hallucinations that p and events of seeing that p —at least on the standard interpretation of what hallucinations are.¹ With this bit of terminology in tow we can distinguish certain ‘good cases’ from their corresponding ‘bad cases’. In the good case one perceptually knows that p because one’s visual experience that p is a seeing that p . In the bad case one does *not* perceptually know that p because one’s visual experience that p is instead a hallucination that p .

Now on a familiar Cartesian conception the kind of rational support one enjoys in the good case—where one perceptually knows that p —*is the same* as the kind of rational support one enjoys in the corresponding bad case.² It makes no difference which case one is in—not where *rational support for suitable perceptual beliefs* is concerned. Where that is concerned the good and bad cases are of the *same kind*. Or in other words it doesn’t matter whether one’s case is such that one sees that p —all that matters is

whether one's case is such that it's introspectively indistinguishable from a case in which one does. You can put this Cartesian idea to work in advance of an argument *against* McDowell's idea that in good cases one can enjoy as good as *factive* rational support for suitable perceptual beliefs:

Argument from Introspective Indistinguishability

- 1) The 'good case' in which one perceptually knows that p is introspectively indistinguishable from a corresponding 'bad case' in which one *thinks* one knows that p but merely hallucinates that p .
- 2) Therefore, one has rational support for believing p in the good case only if one has the same level of rational support for believing p in the corresponding bad case.
- 3) One does not enjoy better than non-factive rational support for believing p in the bad case.
- 4) Therefore, one does not enjoy better than non-factive rational support for believing p in the good case.

The intermediate conclusion (2) is effectively the Cartesian claim that for any pairing of good and bad cases these cases are the same insofar as the rational support available for suitable perceptual beliefs is concerned. It is important to notice that a view like McDowell's will reject that idea outright. The claim here is that it is by no means obvious that (2) should follow from (1).³ Rather we should think that the most perspicuous characterization of the case in which one visually experiences that p is a *disjunctive one*: it is either a case in which one enjoys factive rational support for the relevant perceptual belief, or else it is a case in which one does not (perhaps one enjoys only nonfactive rational support).

The result is a disjunctivism that is distinctively *epistemological* in character. After all, it isn't (necessarily) owing to some crucial *mental* (or

metaphysical) difference between cases in which one visually experiences that p that these get sorted into different kinds. But rather it is owing to a difference in the kind of *rational support* available for suitable perceptual beliefs.

1.2 Varieties of Epistemological Disjunctivism

By now there is considerable variety among those who advance epistemological disjunctivist views. For a start Duncan Pritchard (2012a) (2016), Alan Millar (2010) (2011a) (2011b) (2014) (2016) and John McDowell (1982) (1995) (2011) all endorse the idea that the kind of rational support available for perceptual knowledge in good cases is not only factive *but reflectively accessible* as well. But not every proponent of epistemological disjunctivism seems to agree.

Susanna Schellenberg (2013) (2016), for example, denies this. While she defends a view on which subjects in good cases enjoy both ‘phenomenal evidence’ and ‘factive evidence’ for perceptual beliefs, she maintains that it is always “unbeknownst to the subject” whether one enjoys factive evidence in addition to phenomenal evidence (2016, p. 880), adding that “we need not think that what is accessible from the first-person perspective dictates what is rational to heed” (ibid., 881).⁴

Moreover some describe Timothy Williamson’s (2000) E=K thesis as entailing a kind of epistemological disjunctivism (cf. Smithies 2012). That seems easy enough to accommodate, given the rather general terms in which we have characterized epistemological disjunctivism. Consider that if it is true that your evidence includes all and only what you know (E=K)—or even all and only what you know *non-inferentially* (E=NIK) (cf. Littlejohn 2011)—then it seems to follow that one enjoys a kind of factive evidential support in the good case that one doesn’t enjoy in the corresponding bad case for a given perceptual belief.⁵ After all since in the good case but not the

bad case one *knows that*, say, there is a tomato before one, one enjoys a kind of factive evidential support for believing this consisting solely of the fact itself. But, crucially, no one should think that the fact that there is a tomato before one is reflectively accessible. The view is thus similar to Schellenberg's in this regard.

Secondly some epistemological disjunctivists develop their view in advance of a conception of perceptual *warrant*—that is, the stuff in the good case that turns true belief into perceptual knowledge. Pritchard for example will argue that perceptual knowledge is paradigmatically *constituted* by the kind of factive (and, for him, reflectively accessible) rational support at issue. By contrast someone like Alan Millar (2008a) (2010), while in agreement that perceptual knowledge can enjoy factive rational support, has a very different idea about what makes for perceptual knowledge in such cases. For him one enjoys perceptual knowledge by virtue of exercising certain perceptual-recognitional abilities—where these are *not* abilities to come to know things on the basis of reasons, factive or otherwise. Instead he advances his epistemological disjunctivism in service of a conception of perceptual *justification*, which isn't itself a component of perceptual knowledge. For him perceptual beliefs are justified although not known on the basis of factive rational support. Note that we will come back to discuss Millar's view in more depth in chapter three in connection with the so-called 'basis problem' for epistemological disjunctivism.

Lastly, epistemological disjunctivists differ still more concerning the *role of perceptual experiences* in all this. In principle you can imagine a proponent of epistemological disjunctivism reserving *no role at all* for perceptual experience in explaining why one has factive rational support for perceptual beliefs in good cases. For example you can imagine a proponent of E=K adopting a form of reliabilism about perceptual knowledge that entails that perceptual experiences are irrelevant for explaining why the mechanisms that produce perceptual beliefs are reliable mechanisms. On the view that

results one enjoys factive evidential/rational support for their perceptual beliefs in good cases, but *never* on account of some feature of one's perceptual experiences.

More familiar are disjunctivist views that, by contrast, make it very clear that it is the business of perceptual experiences themselves to furnish factive rational support for perceptual knowledge. John McDowell (2013) for example thinks that it's owing to the *kind of representing* an experience does when it puts one in position to know that things are as it represents them to be that one enjoys factive rational support for perceptual beliefs. In particular he writes that:

“If an experience is a seeing, we can say that the representing it does is its *revealing* or *disclosing* a certain environmental reality; that is, its bringing a certain reality into view for the subject” (2013, p. 147).⁶

By contrast, if an experience is *not* a seeing—if in particular it is a mere hallucination—then one's experience represents in a way that merely *appears* to do that.

It is important to notice that for McDowell it is not as though it is an accidental feature of a visual experience that it 'discloses an environmental reality' to an experiencing subject. Rather for him this looks to be part of the nature of the visual experience, impacting as it does on the experiences “subjective character”. It seems safe to say then that on a view like McDowell's it is *part of the nature of one's experience* that it furnishes one with factive rational support for a suitable perceptual belief when it does.⁷ But we should not lose sight of the fact that this is strictly optional. Alternatively, it may be owing to the way one's perceptual experience is *produced* that it furnishes one with factive rational support, where of course it's being produced in a given way needn't have any impact on its subjective character.

Ernest Sosa (2011), for example, defends a version of epistemological disjunctivism according to which experiences play their role in just this way.

For him it is because a given visual experience is an *apt experience* that it furnishes one with factive rational support in good cases—rational support in terms of one's *seeing that p* to be the case. An apt experience is one that is produced in a particular way. It is one that represents the world accurately in a way that manifests an ability on the part of the subject to do so well enough: in Sosa's terms it is a visual experience that is accurate because competent (or adroit). But, importantly, Sosa need not think that an experience's manifesting competence in this way impacts upon its subjective character. For why couldn't one enjoy an experience of the same *mental kind* as an apt experience while in the bad case? Here we seem to have an epistemological disjunctivism on which perceptual experiences can provide subjects with factive rational support for perceptual beliefs, without it being part of the nature of a perceptual experience that it provides this factive rational support.

That's enough to provide the reader with a sense of the diversity that exists among proponents of epistemological disjunctivism. I think we can do a better job of schematizing all this. In the next subsection I'll provide what I think is a helpful rubric not only for classifying existing versions of epistemological disjunctivism, but also for charting the kinds of possibilities there are for the view.

1.3 The Possibilities for Epistemological Disjunctivism

I think that we can helpfully represent the possibilities for epistemological disjunctivism in terms of three levels, with two options at each level. As it ascends the levels epistemological disjunctivism becomes more involved, progressing from *minimal*, to *standard*, to a *robust* conception of epistemological disjunctivism. Moreover we can imagine that horizontally there are at least two options at each level—what I will call the *warrant* option and the *reflective accessibility* option—so that by adding either one or both

options we can further ‘beef up’ a given disjunctivist view. I think that this is a helpful scheme for mapping out the relevant territory. I’ll introduce the levels first, and then the two options. Note that we will refer back to the essential elements of this scheme in the final chapter of this thesis when we bring our positive proposal to bear on the issue of underdetermination-based radical scepticism.

At our first level, then, epistemological disjunctivism says simply that when one knows that p on the basis of visual perception one’s rational support for believing that p can be as good as factive rational support—rational support that one could not have unless p were true. This represents so far only a *minimal* epistemological disjunctivism, since it’s potentially the least committed version on offer. In particular, at this first level we are not obliged to hold that it’s owing to some feature of one’s visual experience that one enjoys factive rational support in good cases.

That obligation you incur upon ascending to the second level. Here we assign it to visual experiences to furnish one with factive rational support for perceptual beliefs. Here we have something closer to the *standard* conception of epistemological disjunctivism, since I think it’s closer to how most conceive of the view. That is to say that probably most conceive of epistemological disjunctivism not *merely* as a view about there being factive rational support available for perceptual beliefs, but more particularly a view about the *capacity of visual experiences* to furnish such factive rational support.⁸ Still, on the second level we reserve the right to say that it’s only an accidental feature of visual experiences that they make available factive rational support when they do. In particular there is no obligation here to think that this part of the nature of one’s visual experience in good cases.⁹

That obligation you incur, finally, upon ascending to the third level. On the *robust* conception of epistemological disjunctivism that results it is assumed not only that perceptual knowledge can enjoy factive rational support courtesy of visual experiences, but more than that it is part of the

nature of one's visual experience that it furnish the factive rational support at issue. In other words it is because of some important *mental difference* between one's visual experience in the good and bad cases that one's experience in the good case makes available factive rational support. An epistemological disjunctivism at this level thus seems committed to a form of *metaphysical disjunctivism*.¹⁰

With our three levels now in view, what are the two options? At each of our three levels we can imagine adding one, both, or neither of two options: what we can call the warrant option and the reflective accessibility option.

A version of epistemological disjunctivism, at whichever level, takes the warrant option if it conceives of the factive rational support at issue as functioning to warrant one's perceptual belief in good cases—that is, by providing whatever extra ingredient takes true perceptual belief to perceptual knowledge.¹¹ It's natural to conceive of an epistemological disjunctivism that accepts the warrant option as aiming for a reductive analysis of perceptual knowledge in terms of believing something on the basis of a factive reason.¹²

A version of epistemological disjunctivism, at whatever level, takes the reflective accessibility option if it conceives of the kind rational support available in the good case as not only factive but reflectively accessible as well. A version of epistemological disjunctivism along these lines is thought to secure an important 'internalist' desideratum with respect to perceptual knowledge. For it seemingly subscribes to a form of 'accessibilist' internalism that requires a subject to have good reflectively accessible reasons for what they claim to know.¹³

I think that this scheme helps us to imagine a spectrum of views ranging from *barely minimal* to *maximally robust* versions of epistemological disjunctivism. We can conceive of a barely minimal epistemological disjunctivism in terms of a first-level view that accepts neither the warrant nor the reflective accessibility options. At the opposite end we can conceive of a

maximally robust epistemological disjunctivism in terms of a third-level view that accepts both the warrant and the reflective accessibility options. Maximally robust versions have been defended by Duncan Pritchard and John McDowell, and have received nearly all the attention in the literature. For this reason the discussion that follows will be conducted largely in terms of the debate surrounding this sort of view. In the next section I review the positive case for an epistemological disjunctivism of the sort Pritchard and McDowell defend, before considering some problems and challenges for their view.

§2 The Case for Epistemological Disjunctivism

Duncan Pritchard advances an epistemological disjunctivism according to which in paradigmatic cases one knows that p by virtue of believing that p for the reason that one sees that p —this being not only factive but reflectively accessible to the subject. It is meant to be that the view preserves an ‘internalist’ insight to the effect that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the *subject’s* reasons for believing what they do—something we’ll discuss further below. Let’s follow Cunningham (2016) and call this specific version of epistemological disjunctivism ‘reflective epistemological disjunctivism’ or RED.

What is it about RED that makes it attractive? Exactly what do we stand to gain if RED is true? It has been claimed in this connection that RED represents a rapprochement between ‘internalist’ and ‘externalist’ thinking in epistemology, and also that it frees us from the grip of certain radical sceptical problems. I’ll discuss each of these in what follows, before turning to review arguments for thinking that RED is true.

2.1 The Significance of Epistemological Disjunctivism

2.1.1 Internalism vs. Externalism

It's easy to appreciate why RED can seem like a tantalizing view. For if one's rational support for perceptual knowledge can be both factive and reflectively accessible then there seems to be scope for accommodating within a single view *both* internalist and externalist insights in epistemology in unprecedented fashion. After all if one's rational support is factive then we secure the robust connection between one's epistemic support and the truth that externalists often complain is missing from standard internalist accounts.¹⁴ But if this rational support is reflectively accessible as well then we also vouchsafe the kind of robust epistemic responsibility that internalists often complain is missing from standard externalist accounts of perceptual knowledge.

In this way you might think that RED reflects a kind of 'internalist externalism' that goes far beyond the sort defended by William Alston (1988). For according to RED it is not as though one has reflective access *only* to one's grounds for an item of perceptual knowledge and not also to the *adequacy* of those grounds to rationally support the perceptual belief at issue—as things stand on Alston's view. Rather if one enjoys reflectively accessible rational grounds in terms of one's *seeing that p*—as RED maintains—then the fact that those grounds are adequate to support believing that *p* is seemingly read straight off the grounds themselves. That seeing that *p* entails *p* is something that one can determine easily upon reflection, and so it seems to follow that one has reflective access *both* to one's perceptual grounds and to the adequacy of those grounds to support one's belief in a case of perceptual knowledge.¹⁵ It is in this connection that Pritchard conceives of RED as the 'holy grail' of epistemology (cf. 2012a, p. 1).

Some are sceptical, however, that RED properly accommodates the internalist's insight (cf. Boulton 2017; Goldberg 2016). After all it is standard fare for internalists to accept the so-called 'New Evil Genius' thesis (NEG). This is the thought behind the Cartesian conception of perceptual reasons already mentioned in §1 above: that one's reflectively accessible rational support in the good case is no better than it is in the corresponding bad case, say, where one is a 'brain in a vat' (BIV) under the control of an evil genius. In this way it is thought that we should restrict the range of facts that are reflectively accessible to one in the good case to those also available to one's non-factive mental state duplicate in the corresponding bad case. As we have already seen, however, the epistemological disjunctivist doesn't see that there is ultimately any good reason to be restrictive in this way. And so if there is supposed to be some classical internalist insight that hinges on our accepting the NEG thesis, the epistemological disjunctivist will want to hear more about why this represents a genuine insight. Until then she will be perfectly content to advertise her position as a non-classical internalist view.

Of course that still leaves the proponent of RED with the task of providing some alternative explanation of the intuitions that seem to motivate the NEG thesis. That's an important challenge for epistemological disjunctivism that we'll describe further below. Indeed it's a challenge that we address directly and in detail in chapter four of this thesis.

2.1.2 Radical Scepticism

Arguably epistemological disjunctivism is most alluring in connection with radical scepticism about ordinary perceptual knowledge. Epistemological disjunctivists have invoked their view for solving both the closure-based and underdetermination-based radical sceptical problems (cf. Pritchard 2012a, 2016a; Schonbaumsfeld 2016; Neta 2002, 2003).

Genia Schonbaumsfeld (2016) promotes epistemological disjunctivism in connection with this familiar closure-based radical sceptical argument:

Closure-Based Radical Sceptical Argument

- 1) If I know I have two hands, then I know I'm not a BIV.
- 2) I don't know I'm not a BIV.
- 3) Therefore, I don't know I have two hands. (Schonbaumsfeld 2016, p. 7)

This argument is *closure-based* since it trades on a simple closure principle for knowledge to the effect that you can know anything you recognize to be logically implied by what you know. Fred Dretske (1970) (2005) is well known for having disputed premise (1) of this sceptical argument by rejecting the closure principle. By contrast Schonbaumsfeld employs epistemological disjunctivism in service of a different response to this argument—one that rejects premise (2) instead.¹⁶ Of course an obvious benefit of this approach is that it is consistent with what many regard as an eminently plausible closure principle.

Schonbaumsfeld argues that it is because Dretske could not see how the reasons supplied by perceptual experience transmit to more 'heavyweight' propositions such as that one is not a BIV that he thought it necessary to deny the closure principle. But the reason he couldn't see that—argues Schonbaumsfeld—is because he was under the spell of the Cartesian conception of perceptual reasons, or the "reasons identity" thesis, which says that "the perceptual reasons that the good case gives one access to [...] are the same as the reasons that the bad case provides one with" (ibid., p. 3). But if that is *false*, since in the good case one has reasons Schonbaumsfeld captures in terms of "factive experiences", then there is no obvious reason for thinking that such reasons cannot also be reasons for

thinking that, say, one is not a BIV. Thus Schonbaumsfeld thinks that if we adopt epistemological disjunctivism we are afforded a means of rejecting premise (2) of the closure-based sceptical argument at the same time that we are able to diagnose why some have (mistakenly) found it so compelling.¹⁷

Pritchard (2016a) argues that RED is particularly suited for overcoming the underdetermination-based radical sceptical paradox:

The Underdetermination-based Radical Sceptical Paradox

- 1) One cannot have rational support that favors one's perceptual belief that p over the hypothesis that one is only a BIV merely hallucinating that p .
 - 2) Unless one can enjoy rational support that favors one's perceptual beliefs in this way, one cannot have rationally supported knowledge that p .
 - 3) One can enjoy rationally supported perceptual knowledge that p .
- (adapted from Pritchard 2016, p. 34)

This is an *underdetermination-based* rather than closure-based radical sceptical problem since its second claim hinges on what Pritchard calls the underdetermination principle:

If S knows that p and q describe incompatible scenarios, and yet S lacks a rational basis that favors p over q , then S lacks rationally grounded knowledge that p . (Pritchard *ibid.*)

Pritchard argues that since we ought not reject this principle the only viable solution to the paradox is to motivate some rejection of claim (1). Fortunately that seems a rather straightforward task for the proponent of epistemological disjunctivism: for this is only a matter of the same bad Cartesian thinking getting in the way again. Claim (1) only *looks* compelling because it has

seemed impossible to make room for epistemological disjunctivism, leading us to think that we have no other option but to accept the NEG thesis. But this entails what Pritchard calls the *insularity of reasons thesis*: the thought that the kind of rational support one enjoys even in good cases is of a sort that is consistent with one's being widely mistaken in one's perceptual beliefs. It's *this* thought that makes claim (1) seem true—that makes it seem that even in good cases where one knows that there is a tomato on the table one's reasons for thinking so cannot *favor* this belief over the hypothesis that one is only hallucinating a tomato that is not there.

But of course this Cartesian package is precisely what is contested between proponents of RED and their detractors. Since on RED one enjoys rational support for perceptual knowledge that one *could not have* unless what one believed were true, one enjoys rational support that is clearly better than the kind one would have in the bad case—indeed which is *inconsistent* with one's being wildly mistaken in one's perceptual beliefs. But then surely it's obvious how such rational support can *favor* one's perceptual beliefs in the required way. In this way RED promises an escape from the above paradox by furnishing resources for rejecting claim (1), even in step with what Pritchard calls an 'undercutting' anti-sceptical strategy.¹⁸

This is just a sampling of how epistemologists have put epistemological disjunctivism to work for getting to grips with radical sceptical problems.¹⁹ We will return to think about underdetermination-based radical scepticism in connection with RED in the final chapter of this thesis. There I explore this radical sceptical problem in more detail, and challenge Pritchard's suggestion that his version of epistemological disjunctivism is not only sufficient for overcoming that problem, but *necessary* as well ("vital", in his terms). Part of what will emerge here is that whether one's factive rational support is 'reflective accessible' is actually a wheel turning idly in the debate with the underdetermination-based radical sceptic. That is a potential game changer for epistemological disjunctivism, since it relieves entirely the

pressure that has been building for the view from new modifications of the so-called ‘access problem’ (to be discussed below).

2.2 Arguments for Epistemological Disjunctivism

I will now turn to discuss arguments for thinking that epistemological disjunctivism is true. I think you can discern at least three such arguments in the literature: an argument from common sense; an argument to do with the termination of inquiry and responsible vouching for what we see or have seen to be the case; and an argument from ‘reflective luck’. In what follows I will describe each argument in turn, with apologies that we haven’t the space to evaluate any in great depth.

2.2.1 The Argument from Common Sense

To start, proponents of epistemological disjunctivism often claim that their view follows from simply taking our ordinary justificatory practices at face value. When we imagine for example what reasons we have to think ourselves entitled to our ordinary perceptual beliefs we don’t usually think of reasons we might have anyway even if what we believed were false. In particular we don’t imagine ourselves as being entitled to our perceptual beliefs on the basis of visual experiences conceived in such a way so that they are neutral between seeings and mere hallucinations. Rather we ordinarily have something more robust in mind—e.g. that we can just see that there is, for example, a tomato—something that entails the presence of a real tomato. And moreover it’s factive considerations like this that we typically appeal to when asked to defend ourselves for holding a given perceptual belief.²⁰

In this way proponents of epistemological disjunctivism argue that theirs is the default view. The idea being that since disjunctivism represents

the pre-theoretical or common sense conception it should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. It matters a great deal then whether the view can weather the storm of the kinds of challenges and problems that have been raised for the view that we'll discuss later in the final section. But before getting to that I'll review two more arguments for epistemological disjunctivism—one advanced by Alan Millar and the other from John McDowell.

2.2.2 The Argument from Inquiry and Responsible Vouching

One can discern from Alan Millar's (2010) (2011) work a kind of argument from the best explanation for thinking that epistemological disjunctivism is true. Millar argues that unless perceptual knowledge is sometimes "well founded" in a sense that entails epistemological disjunctivism, certain ubiquitous phenomena seem entirely inexplicable. He highlights two such phenomena in particular. First, that inquiries into whether p are often terminated by one's coming to see that p in a way that satisfies one's concern to know whether p is true. And secondly, that we are often able to responsibly vouch for the truth of things that we see or have seen to be the case. These are routine matters, thinks Millar, because often in coming to see that p we get into positions in which it can be *settled* for us that p . His idea is that we are hard pressed to explain how we so often get into these positions short of invoking the idea that perceptual knowledge can enjoy reflectively accessible factive rational support.

Imagine for example that you want to learn whether there are tomatoes in the fridge before setting off for the grocery store. Looking in the fridge you see and thereby come to know that you already have tomatoes. Naturally we think that this should 'settle it' for you that you have tomatoes in a way that satisfies your concern to know whether you do, so that at this point your inquiry into the matter is properly terminated. Consider that we

would think it very odd if this were not enough for you—if you were to go on investigating whether you have tomatoes by, for example, seeking out a second opinion. More than that having now seen that you have tomatoes we now think that this puts you in position to responsibly vouch for the fact that you have some if a third party were interested to know. Millar suggests that all this is very natural if epistemological disjunctivism is true. For if by looking in the fridge you can acquire factive rational support for thinking that you have tomatoes furnished by the fact that you can see that you have some, then—on Millar’s view—that makes all the difference between realizing that you know that you have tomatoes as opposed to realizing only that you have some evidence for thinking so. That’s important since merely realizing that one has some evidence for thinking that something is true is *not* to have things settled on the matter so that one can responsibly vouch for its being true or terminate one’s inquiry in a way that satisfies one’s wanting to know the truth. For it would seem as though one would need some kind of insurance that one’s evidence is not misleading.

To better see Millar’s point imagine that epistemological disjunctivism is false. Imagine that the NEG thesis is true so that by looking in the fridge the kind of rational support you acquire for thinking that you have tomatoes is rational support you might have anyway even if you had no tomatoes. Say for example you acquire only nonfactive rational support in terms of its looking to you as though you have tomatoes in the fridge. Now even if on some conception this can add up to your coming to know that you have tomatoes in the fridge, Millar’s thought is that it doesn’t add up to your *realizing* that you know this as opposed to realizing only that you have some evidence for thinking this is true—evidence that may in the end, for all you know, turn out to have been misleading. But that hardly sustains a basis for explanation of why, by coming to see that p , it is so often settled for us that p so that we can conclude our inquiries into whether p in a way that satisfies our wanting to know the truth of the matter. Much less how coming to see that p puts you

into position to responsibly vouch for p . (Consider how this sounds: p but I can't tell whether I know this rather than only having some evidence for thinking it is true). In any case this seems to be Millar's argument. An evaluation will have to wait for another occasion.

2.2.3 The Argument from 'Reflective Luck'.

For McDowell human knowledge is a species of a wider genus including other kinds of knowledge—for instance knowledge of a sort that even nonhuman animals and infant children can enjoy. In this respect he seems in agreement with Sosa that there are at least two kinds of knowledge that we do well to keep distinct²¹ (we seize upon this theme later in this thesis). But it is the 'higher' of these kinds that McDowell is interested in—the kind of knowledge that is distinctive of language-using creatures such as ourselves. McDowell following Sellars thinks that such knowledge is a “standing in the space of reasons”—the space of “justifying and being able to justify what one says” (Sellars 1963, p. 169). Thus on this conception it looks as though knowledge requires not only justification, but, if this is different, that one *be able to justify* one's claim to have knowledge in the context of challenge. With ordinary perceptual beliefs in view, McDowell is interested to lay bare what he thinks are “the justifications available to us for claims about the external world.” (2002, p. 98).²²

In his “Knowledge and the Internal” (1998) McDowell argues that nothing that obeys what we call the 'hybrid conception' of knowledge can add up to knowledge of this kind—knowledge that involves one's occupying a suitable position in the space of reasons. On the hybrid (or orthodox) view one doesn't know something *simply* by virtue of occupying a suitable position in that space—rather the *truth* of one's belief is conceived of as an additional component. The result is that whenever one is supposed to perceptually know something, whether what one believes is true is something “external to

the [one's] rational powers", or, what comes to the same thing, external to one's "operations in the space of reasons". *But* McDowell writes:

"(...) if it's being so is external to her operations in the space of reasons, how can it not be outside the reach of her rational powers? And if it is outside the reach of her rational powers, how can its being so be the crucial element in an intelligible conception of her knowing that it is so [...]? It's being so is conceived as external to the only thing that is supposed to be epistemologically significant about the knower herself, her satisfactory standing in the space of reasons" (1995, p. 884).

For those unsure about what the intuitive problem here is supposed to be, McDowell, elaborates:

"[On the hybrid conception] the extra that we need for knowledge—the fact that the case in question is not one of those in which a largely reliable habit or policy of belief-formation leads the subject astray—is, relative to the knower's moves in the space of reasons, a stroke of good fortune, a favor that the world does her" (*ibid.*).

In another place McDowell writes in this connection that this "involves conceding that whether what one has is knowledge is to some extent a matter of luck, outside the control of reason" (1998, p. 440).

Now here is my gloss on this: McDowell is imploring that it's inconsistent with one's knowing that p that, relative to what one is permitted to cite in defense of a claim that p , it is sheer luck that this is one of those times when what one believes it true instead of being one of those times that an otherwise highly reliable although fallible process leads one to believe something false. But that's precisely the position that the hybrid conception has us in with respect to our perceptual beliefs. Even in the best cases our best reasons for believing what we take ourselves to know fall short of the fact itself, so that for all we are in position to cite in defense of a claim to know it we might not even have the truth about it. Put another way it can seem difficult to make out how this amounts to one's knowing that p is true as

opposed to knowing only that p is (perhaps even very) probable given one's evidence.

The only alternative, thinks McDowell, is that we learn to see how states like *seeing that p* can constitute suitable positions in the space of reasons—or, what comes to the same thing, learn to see how seeing that p can itself be available to cite in defense of a claim about the external world. For only then would it not be 'reflectively lucky', as we might say—that is, lucky relative to what one has available as citable reasons for their belief—that what one takes oneself to know is true.²³

That's one kind of argument you can find from McDowell for thinking that epistemological disjunctivism is true. It's an argument stemming from supposedly intuitive considerations to do with knowledge as involving a suitable standing in the space of reasons, and reflective luck. Problems remain that we haven't time to take up in detail. For one, we'll need some explanation of how one *has* factive rational support in terms of one's seeing that p that doesn't launch upon an infinite regress, or else force us to say implausible things about perceptual experience (for related discussion see Littlejohn 2017 and *forthcoming b*).

§3 Problems and Challenges for Epistemological Disjunctivism

That concludes our brief review of the positive case for reflective epistemological disjunctivism (or RED)—the view most closely associated with what Pritchard defends with inspiration from McDowell. In this final section I'll review some of the problems that RED is thought susceptible to, and how epistemological disjunctivists like Pritchard have responded to those problems. We'll also review three challenges for RED that have emerged more recently—challenges with respect to articulating RED's 'reflective accessibility' condition, as well as with respect to accommodating what seem

like conflicting intuitions about justification in cases of radical deception. But first the problems. There are thought to be four of them.

3.1 Four Problems for Epistemological Disjunctivism

3.1.1 The Basis Problem

First, RED can seem susceptible to what Pritchard has called the ‘basis problem’ for epistemological disjunctivism (cf. Pritchard 2011, 2012a, 2016). The problem, Pritchard writes, “concerns the very idea of a factive reason providing epistemic support for knowledge” (2012a, p. 21). Recall that RED holds that in paradigmatic cases one perceptually knows that p by virtue of believing that p on the rational basis of one’s seeing that p to be the case. Trouble is that many have thought that seeing that p entails knowing that p on account of simply being the way in which one knows that p (cf. Williamson 2000; Stroud 2010; Cassam 2007; Dretske 1969). But if an entailment thesis²⁴ like this is correct then it can seem difficult to make out how one can know that p on the epistemic basis of one’s seeing that p , unless perceptual knowledge is somehow epistemically supporting itself.²⁵

We should note two things straightaway. First, it seems that only views like RED that take what we called in §1 ‘the warrant option’ are susceptible to the basis problem. For example, the above entailment thesis seems innocuous against an epistemological disjunctivism like the kind Alan Millar (2010) defends according to which perceptual knowledge is justified but *not warranted* on account of one’s seeing that p . Even if seeing that p is just knowing that p in a particular way, it isn’t clear why one cannot know that p on the *rational basis* of one’s seeing that p if it isn’t part of the picture that one’s seeing that p is helping to carry one’s true perceptual belief to perceptual knowledge.²⁶ If this is unclear just now then not to worry! We’ll come back to discuss this in more detail in chapter three. Second, only

disjunctivist views that conceive of one's factive rational support in terms of one's seeing that p seem susceptible to the basis problem. For example the basis problem doesn't arise for views on which one's factive reason is one's merely seeing a situation in which p (French 2015), or one's seeing p to have some property (Haddock 2011).

But for those who do advance versions of epistemological disjunctivism like RED that *are* susceptible to the basis problem, there seems available at least two lines of response.

First, one might deny the entailment thesis. Pritchard (2012a), McDowell (2002), and Sosa (2011) take this line. Pritchard and McDowell argue, for example, that while seeing that p is *like* knowing that p in being both factive and robustly epistemic, seeing that p merely 'puts you in position' to know that p —insofar as you need then only believe that p in order to know that p . This is because, they think, while we cannot divorce believing that p from knowing that p we can divorce believing that p from seeing that p . Pritchard and McDowell provide cases that seem to suggest as much. For example, if you see a tomato but fail to believe that you do because you have been misled to think it is something else in disguise, it might seem perfectly permissible for you to say, in hindsight, after having learned of the deception in play, that you saw that there was a tomato before you even though at the time you didn't think that there was.²⁷

On the second line of response one might accept the entailment thesis but argue that it need not entail that one cannot perceptually know that p on the epistemic basis of one's seeing that p —that in particular it need not entail that one's perceptual knowledge is epistemically self-supporting in some vicious or otherwise unacceptable fashion. While Pritchard (2011, p. 441-42) suggests that he has "some sympathy with this line of response", it is a position that remains without any defense or exploration in the literature. Notably, then, in chapter three of this thesis I stage a defense of RED along just these lines. I employ our epistemological disjunctivism about distinctively

judgmental perceptual knowledge in service of a view that both accepts the warrant option while remaining consistent with the entailment thesis. This I maintain is a point in favor of developing epistemological disjunctivism in the desired direction.

3.1.2 The Access Problem

Second, RED can seem susceptible to what Pritchard has called the ‘access problem’. It can seem that one has rational support for a perceptual belief that *p* that is both *factive* and *reflectively accessible* only if *p* itself is reflectively accessible as well. After all if one can know by reflection alone that one sees that *p*, and one can know by reflection alone that one can see that *p* only if *p*, doesn’t that enable a purely reflective route to the fact that *p* via a suitable inference? But, of course, here *p* is supposed to be an empirical proposition—not the kind of thing that one should be able to acquire purely reflective knowledge of in this way.

Arguably, the strongest version of this objection assumes that one could have reflective access to the fact that one sees that *p* short of believing that *p*. For only then is it imaginable that one could *acquire* a belief that *p* on the basis of a suitable inference from facts one can know by reflection alone—viz., the facts that one can see that *p* and that one sees that *p* only if *p*. However Pritchard (2012a, p. 46-52) explains that the epistemological disjunctivist needn’t commit to this assumption. Rather the claim is that it is only in *paradigmatic cases* of perceptual knowledge that one has reflective access to the *factive* rational support at issue, where the paradigmatic case is one in which one already knows that *p* (and so believes that *p*) on the rational basis of one’s seeing that *p*. The result is that any purely reflective route to acquiring knowledge that *p* is clearly shut off, since it’s impossible that one have reflective access to one’s seeing that *p* short of believing that *p* to be the case.

Now a different *weaker* version of the objection assumes that even if it's impossible to *acquire* the putative empirical knowledge in question on the rational basis of information one has purely reflective access too, even still, just enjoying putative perceptual knowledge that *p* on the rational basis of a reflectively accessible factive reason entails that one has purely reflective access to *p*. But it's not at all clear why that should follow. For as Pritchard (2012a) notes, the factive reason at issue is the *empirical* reason that one sees that *p*. But then if one has reflective access to factive rational support *only insofar* as one knows that *p* on the rational basis of an empirical reason, then surely the *knowledge* in question is empirical and not purely reflective (or *a priori*). Pritchard concludes that while in paradigmatic cases one may have purely reflective access to the fact that one's rational basis for knowing that *p* entails that *p*, one does not have purely reflective access to *p* itself.²⁸

Now Tim Kraft (2015) argues that this still leaves RED with what he calls 'epistemological disjunctivism's genuine access problem', which likewise has to do with one's having *reflective access* to factive rational support. The difference is that the problem is not that having reflective access to factive rational support seems to entail that one can have reflective access to empirical propositions. Rather the problem is to explain how one's access is legitimately reflective (or *a priori*) at the same time that it's access to factive rational support, without having to admit that states like being surprised that *p* constitute reflectively accessible factive rational support as well. This is one element of an important emerging challenge for RED to be considered in more detail below—the challenge to explain just *how* one has reflective access to one's factive rational support without having to give up on certain other things that we should want to maintain.

3.1.3 The Distinguishability Problem

The third problem for RED is what Pritchard (2012a) calls the ‘distinguishability problem’. It is a datum that a good case and its corresponding bad case are in some sense subjectively indistinguishable from one another. However the proponent of RED who takes the reflective accessibility option claims that in the good case one has reflective access to the fact that one can see that p . But then since one also knows by reflection alone that one sees that p only if one is in the good case and not in the bad case, does it not follow that the good case is *not* subjectively indistinguishable from the bad case, contrary to hypothesis?

Pritchard argues on independent grounds that we have reason to disambiguate two senses of ‘distinguishability’ in play here. Yes, it follows from the fact that in the good case one has reflective access to the fact that one can see that p that one can *reflectively* distinguish one’s case from the corresponding bad case. It is in this connection that Pritchard claims that one’s seeing that p constitutes *favoring rational support* for the target belief. But that does not entail that one can then *introspectively* distinguish one’s case from the corresponding bad case—that is, tell one’s case from the latter case on the basis of introspection alone. It is in this connection that Pritchard claims that seeing that p , in the relevant context, does not constitute *discriminatory* rational support for the target perceptual belief.

Consider this case for illustration. Imagine that you are at the zoo and while looking at a zebra wonder to yourself whether it might be a cleverly distinguished mule instead. It can be tempting to think that at this point unless you are in position to rationally discount the cleverly disguised mule hypothesis you cannot sustain your rationally grounded knowledge that it’s a zebra (so thinks Pritchard, anyway; see Pritchard and Carter 2016). However rather than deny that you know any longer that it’s a zebra before you, instead Pritchard argues that by virtue of enjoying relevant background information you *are* in position to rationally discount the cleverly disguised mule hypothesis—and so know that this is a zebra *rather than* a cleverly

disguised mule. You know for example that it is highly unlikely that this is a cleverly disguised mule, given the disincentive that exists for intentionally misrepresenting the animals (think of the risk to the zoo's reputation). And so by virtue of being in possession of such background information Pritchard argues that you are in position to *reflectively* distinguish your case from a case in which you're being confronted with a cleverly disguised mule. However it remains that you cannot *introspectively* distinguish the two cases, since zebras and cleverly disguised mules, by hypothesis, visually look exactly the same to you. And so Pritchard will maintain that examples like this one give us reason to think that even though one can *reflectively* distinguish one's case from another case this needn't entail that one can *introspectively* distinguish between the two cases at issue.

In the end then Pritchard's big idea is that reflective distinguishability need not entail introspective distinguishability. And so it is open to the disjunctivist to maintain that it is *introspective indistinguishability* that we have in mind when we say that—even by RED's lights—the good case can be subjectively indistinguishable from the corresponding bad case. RED is therefore *not* obviously in tension with the relevant datum.

3.1.4 The Assertion Problem

The fourth problem for RED Pritchard never names although he does treat it in considerable depth. We can call it 'the assertion problem' for epistemological disjunctivism (cf. Pritchard 2012a, pp. 141-50). As Pritchard explains the problem concerns making "explicit knowledge claims" in radical sceptical contexts.

Imagine for example that you are seated at a table upon which sits a bright red tomato. You see it clearly, and thereby take yourself to know that it's a tomato. Now imagine that the sceptic comes along and raises an error possibility to the effect that it might not be a tomato because you are a BIV

only seeming to see a tomato that isn't there. Notice how in this radical sceptical context it now seems illegitimate for you to assert, "no, in fact I (perceptually) know that it's a tomato". This is potentially problematic because it seems like something that RED is unable to explain. For why exactly should it be wrong to assert that one knows that p in radical sceptical contexts since, as the proponent of RED maintains, it's *true* that one knows that p and moreover one is in possession of *factive rational support* to back it up?

In fact Pritchard argues that there is nothing here that the epistemological disjunctivist cannot explain. The reason it seems strange for one to enter explicit knowledge claims in radical sceptical contexts is not because what one claims is false, or because one doesn't possess knowledge that is suitably enough rationally grounded, even grounded in terms of *factive rational support*—no.²⁹ The reason it seems strange or conversationally inappropriate, Pritchard suggests, is that by claiming that one perceptually knows that p in a context where some *not- p* error possibility has been raised, one thereby implies that one is able to *introspectively distinguish* between the relevant error possibility and the target belief. But of course that is a false implicature where radical sceptical error possibilities are concerned, since it's impossible that one be able to perceptually discriminate between p and *not- p* where the relevant *not- p* scenario is a radical sceptical one. In this way, Pritchard argues, we can explain why it should be conversationally inappropriate to *assert* that one (perceptually) knows that p in radical sceptical contexts consistently with it's being the case that one indeed knows that p , and even on the basis of reflectively accessible *factive rational support*.³⁰

3.2 New Challenges for Epistemological Disjunctivism

3.2.1 New Reflective Access Challenge(s)

Finally I would like to highlight three new challenges for RED. The first is a kind of new access challenge, which really begins where we just left off the epistemological disjunctivist's response to the distinguishability problem. It challenges the disjunctivist to elaborate further *how* one's factive rational support for perceptual knowledge is something one can have *reflective access to* without incurring further problems. For example, while Boulton (2017) worries whether one can provide such an account while remaining true to the thought that the good and bad cases are truly introspectively indistinguishable, Kraft (2015) worries about remaining true to the thought that while factive states like seeing that *p* may constitute epistemic support for perceptual beliefs certain other factive states like being surprised that *p* cannot.

To get a grip on the sort of worry that Boulton (2017) gestures at it will be helpful to consider a recent paper by J.J. Cunningham (2016). Cunningham argues that in order to explain how one has reflective access to one's seeing that *p* one ultimately needs to make sense of how one can be in a position to bring the fact that one sees that *p* to mind through some *introspective process* (ibid., 119-24). However if a certain 'constitution principle' is correct, Cunningham argues, then one can introspect that one sees that *p* only if one's seeing that *p* constitutes the phenomenal character of the relevant tract of one's subjective experience (p. 119). Cunningham notes that this plausibly entails a form metaphysical disjunctivism according to which what it is like for example to see a tomato in the good case is different from what it is like to hallucinate one in the corresponding bad case.

But now it seems that we have put considerable pressure on the idea that the good case is introspectively indistinguishable from the bad case. After all why should it be impossible from within the good case to distinguish one's case from the bad case if what it is like to be in the good case is different from what it is like to be in the bad case (i.e. if in fact they are

phenomenally different cases)? You can see how if Cunningham is correct then it may be difficult for the proponent of RED to elaborate how one can have reflective access to one's seeing that p without compromising on the idea that the good case is subjectively indistinguishable from the bad case by virtue of one's being unable to tell the good case apart from the bad case via introspection alone. I'll point to two possible lines of response.

First, the proponent of RED might concede Cunningham's point that one can have reflective access to one's seeing that p in the good case only if in the good case one *can*—after all—tell one's case apart from the bad case via introspection. But then we are owed some alternative explanation of what it means to say that the good and bad cases are subjectively indistinguishable. Here's one such explanation: while the two cases *are* introspectively distinguishable from within the good case, they are *not* introspectively distinguishable from within the bad case. The two cases are subjectively indistinguishable, then, in this sense. For any good case from within which one can introspectively distinguish one's case from the bad case, there exists a bad case from within which one is tricked into thinking that one can do this. That is, there exists a bad case from within which it *only seems* as though one can introspectively distinguish one's case from the bad case (a case isn't introspectively distinguishable from itself, after all). Of course this comes down to saying, in a nutshell, that by introspectively telling apart one's case from the bad case one exercises *fallible* capacities to do so. But that shouldn't lead us to think, on this view, that when we set out to introspectively tell our case apart from the bad case *while in the good case* this isn't precisely what we succeed at doing.

A second response may dispute Cunningham's idea that we can elaborate how one can have reflective access to one's seeing that p only in terms of one's having introspective access to that fact. Cunningham thinks this because he thinks that one can have reflective access to one's seeing that p only if either one has introspective access to this fact, or else one can

infer that one sees that p from other things one can know by reflection alone. But this misses an important third option: why cannot one come to non-inferentially know that one sees that p via some non-introspective process of bringing one's seeing that p to mind?

For example, one might appeal to the existence of a second-order recognitional (or non-inferential) capacity to tell of something one sees to be the case *that* one sees it to be the case. Alan Millar (2008) claims that one can gain reflective knowledge of one's seeing that p by exercising a capacity of just this sort. He writes explicitly that this *is not* "an introspective ability, for there is no inner scrutiny of anything", adding, for example, that "I do not think about or introspect my experience in the case in which I judge that I see azaleas any more than I do when I tell that the shrubs are azaleas by way of response to the same experience (ibid., p. 342). By these means we might explain how one has reflective access to one's seeing that p without having to admit that one need ultimately have introspective access to this fact, and so without feeling pressured to admit that the good and bad cases are not anymore introspectively indistinguishable from one another. A potential drawback of this line of response is that it may seem that it merely defines into existence just what one needs so that it is potentially *ad hoc* on this score. But an even further problem may stem from the fact that we still haven't quite said enough.

For surely one also has recognitional capacities to tell that one is surprised about something when something surprises one. Moreover to be surprised that p is factive—one cannot be surprised that p unless p is true. But then why should the fact that one sees that p constitute reflectively accessible *epistemic support* for believing that p while the fact that one is surprised that p cannot? Tim Kraft (2015) suggests that the answer may have to do with the fact that one's *mode of access* to these types of factive state is different. For example perhaps one's seeing that p is *transparent* in a way that one's being surprised that p is not. But appealing to transparency

isn't open to the proponent of RED, Kraft maintains, since it entails that one has access to one's seeing that p by virtue of coming to know that p in a particular visual-empirical way. But then it is not at all clear how this amounts to one's having *reflective* access to an empirical reason anymore—that is, access that doesn't constitutively depend on one's acquiring the relevant empirical knowledge at issue (see especially Kraft 2015, pp. 325-330).

This Kraft says is epistemological disjunctivism's "genuine access problem". But it serves nicely to further bring out the sense in which proponents of RED have more explaining to do. Namely, with respect to the mechanisms involved in one's having purely reflective access to factive propositional seeings. Part of what I'll be doing in this thesis is motivating a conception of epistemological disjunctivism on which this new 'explanatory problem' evaporates. Watch for when I argue in the final chapter that epistemological disjunctivism has nothing to lose—in particular with respect to its anti-sceptical import—by dropping the reflective access component altogether.

3.2.2 The 'New Evil Genius' Challenge

In §2 above we noted that the classical internalist is wedded to the 'new evil genius' thesis (NEG) according to which one's rational support in the good case cannot be any better than the rational support available to one in the corresponding bad case. After all upon reflecting on one's situation in the bad case it can seem that one has every reason to adopt one's perceptual belief that one has in the good case—that in fact one is equally justified in doing so. We can call this the 'parity intuition'.³¹ Insofar as the proponent of RED rejects the NEG thesis they owe some alternative explanation of the 'parity intuition' that can otherwise seem to entail it. If one does not have every bit as much rational support in the bad case as one has in the good case then

why can that seem like the right thing to say? This is the ‘new evil genius’ challenge.

Early on appeals were made to *blamelessness* (cf. Williamson 2000; Pritchard 2012a; McDowell 2002; Littlejohn 2009). Neither you nor your radically deceived duplicate is at fault for believing that there is a tomato before you when you seem to see one. And that is the reality undergirding the parity intuition. But Brent Madison (2014) for example argues that mere blamelessness is insufficient for the task. After all a brain lesion victim is also blameless for believing that he sees a tomato when this is the result of his suffering a brain lesion. Plausibly though your radically deceived duplicate performs in a way that is epistemically *better* than the brain lesion victim in believing what his or her visual experiences seem to report. That each is merely blameless for believing what they do will obviously not account for this distinction. The parity intuition seems to run deeper than the epistemological disjunctivist anticipates.

In chapter four of this thesis we tackle this new challenge head on. Part of what we say there may be seen as a development of Clayton Littlejohn’s “A Plea for Epistemic Excuses” (*forthcoming b*).³² Here Littlejohn points out that subjects can be made blameless *for different reasons*. For example sometimes a subject is blameless because she either “lacked the rational capacities needed for assuming responsibility for her actions and attitudes or because these rational capacities were compromised.” Then she is blameless because *exempted*. But other times a subject is blameless for a wrongdoing, not because she is exempt but because she is *excused*. Littlejohn writes that “excusing conditions really only excuse when they are present alongside a display of virtue” [...] “affirming the excellent use of the subject’s capacities in spite of the wrong (...)”. In chapter four I elaborate what I think the epistemological disjunctivist should say these ‘displays of virtue’ consist in. In particular I argue that they are the subject’s having believed in a way that is both epistemically responsible and reasonable in ways that I flesh out.

With these distinctions in tow, I argue, the epistemological disjunctivist has what she needs in order to confront the ‘new evil genius’ challenge in its most recent incarnations.

3.2.3 The Internalist Challenge

Finally, epistemological disjunctivists confront what I am going to call ‘the internalist challenge’. While those who push the ‘new evil genius’ challenge doubt that epistemological disjunctivism can accommodate the internalist’s insight concerning perceptual knowledge, others doubt that there is so much as an internalist insight here to begin with. For example Littlejohn (2015) (2017) is sceptical of the very idea that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the *subject’s reasons* for believing what they do. Littlejohn thinks that perception provides us with reasons alright, but that is because it provides us with knowledge of the world. *Not* because it provides us with something prior to perceptual knowledge that a subject then exploits to acquire that knowledge.

I think Littlejohn is right to push epistemological disjunctivists on this score. I don’t think disjunctivists have said enough to vindicate the supposed ‘internalist insight’ they claim their view does well to accommodate. I engage this internalist challenge immediately in the next chapter. It provides a suitable occasion for introducing this thesis’ main positive proposal: it’s because perception provides one with *judgmental perceptual knowledge* that it provides one with knowledge by providing one with (factive) reasons. For judgmental perceptual knowledge just is a kind of knowledge whose essential nature involves so-called ‘motivating reasons’. I come on to this in more detail next.

Conclusion

In this opening chapter I think I have presented the relevant territory so as to afford some helpful perspective for approaching the current project. Not only have I provided some sense of the diversity that exists among proponents of epistemological disjunctivism, I have also reviewed the considerations that are thought to motivate the specific kind of epistemological disjunctivism that I'll be concerned with in this project—the sort of 'reflective epistemological disjunctivism' advanced by Duncan Pritchard with inspiration from John McDowell. I have also provided an up-to-date review of various problems and challenges this view is thought to face, highlighting those that will receive particular treatment in what follows in terms of the positive proposal to be introduced in detail in the next chapter.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ In these terms even a naïve realist can allow *some sense* in which seeings of a tomato and hallucinations as of a tomato are the *same* visual experience—the same insofar as both are introspectively indistinguishable from an event of seeing an actual tomato.

² Also known as 'the new evil genius thesis' (Pritchard 2012a), or the 'reasons identity thesis' (Schonbaumsfeld 2016).

³ Some epistemological disjunctivists have an easier time resisting the move from (1) to (2) than others. In particular, those who like McDowell subscribe to rational support that's both *factive and reflectively accessible* will have a tougher time than those who don't subscribe to the latter idea, such as Williamson (2000) and Schellenberg (2015). For it can seem that those who follow McDowell open themselves up to a kind of 'explanatory challenge' (Boult

2017)—otherwise known as the ‘indistinguishability problem’ (Pritchard 2012a). More on this below.

⁴ Note that Schellenberg doesn’t describe her view as a form of epistemological disjunctivism. But in applying this term to Schellenberg’s view I am following Byrne and Logue (2008) who suggest that a difference in available evidence for perceptual beliefs between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ cases suffices for an epistemological disjunctivist view. Consider for example this quote from Byrne and Logue (2008, p xvi): “So McDowell thinks the good and bad cases are epistemologically very different: your evidence in the good case is much stronger than it is in the corresponding bad case. *He is thus and epistemological disjunctivist!*” (emphasis added).

⁵ Here we assume that if *E* is evidence for *p* then *E* offers some evidential support for *p*. Perhaps that inference is dubious. If so then we should say that while Williamson thinks that one can have radically different evidence for a perceptual belief that *p* in the good and bad cases, this does not entail an asymmetry in evidential *support* between the good and bad cases.

⁶ In another place McDowell describes the kind of representing as the making of a fact manifest to its subject (1982, p. 389).

⁷ While Schellenberg (2015) agrees with McDowell that it’s part of the essential nature of an experience that it furnish it’s subject factive evidence, she’s clear that this doesn’t have an impact on an experiences’ subjective or phenomenal character. On her view, while pairs of matching experiences in the good and bad case are the same mental event in one respect, they’re different mental events in another. And it’s because of this difference that two experiences sustain a different rational support value in each case. The experiences are the same insofar they share the same ‘content type’, where this is described as a ‘potentially particularized content’, a content that purports to be of particular objects in the world. The experiences differ, however, with respect to their ‘token contents’. In the good case one’s experience succeeds in singling out a particular, which it doesn’t in the bad case, resulting in a ‘gappy’ token content. For Schellenberg, it’s this difference in token contents that makes for the difference in rational support value between the two experiences, so that in the one case but not the other one enjoys factive rational support—or ‘factive evidence’—for one’s perceptual beliefs.

⁸ Commentators on epistemological disjunctivism are clearly prone to interpret the thesis in connection with perceptual experience in this way. For example, Smithies (2012) writes that epistemological disjunctivism is a “thesis about the nature of rational support—that is, the reasons, justification, or evidence—that *perception* provides for beliefs about the external world” (emphasis added). Logue (2015, p. 206) claims that on “disjunctivism about perceptual evidence [...] *veridical experiences* provide less evidence than hallucinatory experiences do for claims about one’s environment” (emphasis added). Soteriou (2014) claims that the epistemological disjunctivist thinks that “*one’s experience* provides one with grounds for making knowledgable perceptual judgments about the mind-independent world that would be lacking if one were merely hallucinating” (emphasis added). Finally Lyons (2016) characterizes epistemological disjunctivism as saying that “the reason we are justified in the good case but not in the bad is that a *veridical perceptual experience* is a distinct type of mental state from a hallucination (...)” (emphasis added).

⁹ Millar (2010) and Sosa (2011) clearly defend versions of epistemological disjunctivism on the second-level.

¹⁰ McDowell’s view, for instance, pretty clearly seems committed to a form of metaphysical disjunctivism, as does Schellenberg’s view (2013) (2015). For a particularly accessible discussion of different forms of metaphysical disjunctivism see Logue (2015).

¹¹ Notice that to take the warrant option is also to *deny* that whatever rational support one has in cases of hallucinatory experiences (if any) is sufficient to play the warranting role in the good case (Byrne and Logue 2008 refer to this as a ‘common justifying element’). For

otherwise why would that rational support *not* be playing the warranting role in the good case, contrary to hypothesis?

¹² Although even this doesn't seem mandatory. You can imagine a view of perceptual warrant that says that it's one's believing that *p* for the reason that one sees that *p* that takes one's perceptual belief to perceptual knowledge, and yet offers an analysis of what it is to see that *p* in terms of perceptually-based knowledge (i.e. to see that *p* is just to be in position to know that *p*, or some such).

¹³ Pritchard (2012a) (2016a), McDowell (1983) (2011) (2013) and Millar (2010) (2014) (2016) all opt for this option.

¹⁴ Pritchard (2012a, p. 3) writes that "according to epistemological disjunctivism the [truth] connection is very direct indeed, since being in possession of the relevant epistemic support actually entails that the proposition believed is true."

¹⁵ Compare McDowell when he writes that when one knows something perceptually one exercises a "capacity to get into positions in which one knows that it is through one's perceptual state that one knows something about the environment—and so *knows that one's perceptual state conclusively warrants one in the belief in question*" (my emphasis) (2011, p. 42).

¹⁶ See Neta (2003) for an interesting contextualist variant of Schonbaumsfeld's anti-sceptical strategy.

¹⁷ Pritchard (2012a) also explores a response to closure-based skepticism along similar lines. Although in matter of fact he prefers a different Wittgensteinian approach, one that limits the scope of rational evaluations in a certain way. For more on Pritchard's 'biscopic' approach to coping with radical skepticism see Pritchard (2016a).

¹⁸ It is an 'undercutting' strategy insofar as it removes the support for premise two, rather than providing independent reasons to think it false. A 'rebutting' strategy of the latter kind admits that the paradox is legitimate, issuing naturally from our most basic thinking in epistemology. An undercutting strategy by contrast reveals the paradox as illusory, as issuing from a piece of philosophical theory (NEG thesis) that's actually optional, but pretends to be common sense.

¹⁹ For other discussions of disjunctivism in connection with radical skepticism, see McDowell (1995), Millar (2008) (2012), Pritchard and Ranalli (*forthcoming*).

²⁰ McDowell (2008, p. 385) writes that "the canonical justification for a perceptual claim is that one perceives that things are as it claims they are (...)".

²¹ See, e.g., Sosa (2009) for discussion of his famous distinction between 'animal' knowledge and 'reflective' knowledge. Although since Sosa (2011) (2015), the distinction is now between a kind of animal knowledge and a kind of 'knowing full well' that entails reflective knowledge.

²² That is one way of making sense of what McDowell says about such knowledge elsewhere: "whose instances are self-conscious rationally at work" (2011, p. 10). For unless the credentials by virtue of which one knows a given thing are available to one's self-conscious awareness, one can't very well appeal to those credentials in conversation in defense of their believing it to be true.

²³ For a discussion of 'reflective luck', compared to other forms of knowledge-undermining luck, see Pritchard (2005, p. 175).

²⁴ What we will later call the 'seeing = way of knowing' or SwK thesis in chapter three.

²⁵ As Pritchard (2011, p. 441) puts it, "then it is hard to see why seeing that *p* could constitute one's rational *basis* for knowing that *p* since seeing that *p* already presupposes knowledge that *p*."

²⁶ Ghijsen (2015, p. 1155) points this out as well, and Millar (2016) himself suggests as much in a footnote.

²⁷ See Ghijsen (2015) for critique of this move. Ghijsen is also sceptical that Pritchard (2012a) can even make sense of idea that seeing that p merely puts one in position to know that p without invoking perceptual knowledge itself. The result would be that there's no scope for invoking this conception in a reductive account of perceptual knowledge (pp. 1150-52).

²⁸ See also Neta and Pritchard 2007.

²⁹ Although note that this is precisely the sort of response Ram Neta is in position to give to the assertion problem (cf. Neta 2003, 2004). Unlike Pritchard Neta embeds his epistemological disjunctivism within what he calls a "dogmatist contextualism" (2004, p.211). The reason why according to Neta it's inappropriate to enter explicit claims to perceptually know that p in radical sceptical contexts is because in these contexts these knowledge claims are actually *false*. After all perceptual knowledge that p requires having conclusive rational support for believing that p . And while in ordinary nonsceptical contexts one can enjoy conclusive evidence (or rational support) for perceptual beliefs, in contexts where certain sceptical hypotheses are raised one enjoys only nonconclusive (or nonfactive) evidential or rational support for perceptual beliefs.

³⁰ For criticism see Schonbaumsfeld (2015), and Pritchard (2015) for a response.

³¹ In fact this isn't *exactly* the characterization of the parity intuition that I favor. For further discussion see chapter four.

³² For another project written in the same spirit see also Williamson (*forthcoming*).

CHAPTER TWO

Epistemological Disjunctivism and The Internalist Challenge

Introduction¹

In the last chapter we explored epistemological disjunctivism in rather general terms, before honing in on what is arguably the most well-known version of the view: what we there called ‘reflective epistemological disjunctivism’. Recall that according to this view perceptual knowledge can enjoy rational support that is not only *factive* but *reflectively accessible* as well.² We said that Duncan Pritchard is notable for advancing this view in service of an account of the *epistemic basis* of perceptual knowledge—according to which perception provides one with knowledge *by virtue* of providing *factive* and *reflectively accessible* rational support for perceptual beliefs.³

We noted also that it’s an important part of the significance of epistemological disjunctivism that it claims to accommodate *both* internalist and externalist insights with regard to perceptual knowledge. Insofar as one’s epistemic support is *factive* it entails that what one believes is true—capturing the externalist’s insight that there should be a robust connection between one’s epistemic support and the fact known. But insofar as that epistemic support is also *reflectively accessible* it entails that one can be made aware that one has it without any fuss—capturing what is meant to be the internalist’s insight that it is by providing one with *good reflectively accessible reasons* that perception provides one with knowledge of the world.

But just before finishing we noted that while some are sceptical that epistemological disjunctivism succeeds in securing the internalist’s insight,⁴ others are sceptical that there is even an internalist *insight* here to begin with.

Clayton Littlejohn (2015) (2016) for example challenges the epistemological disjunctivist to explain why we should think that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons at all, let alone *factive* reasons, for believing what one knows. I think it is important that epistemological disjunctivism have something substantive to say in this connection. Otherwise it isn't clear why it is a *virtue* of the view that it aligns itself with an internalist approach. This we called 'the internalist challenge'. I think Littlejohn is right that disjunctivists should feel challenged to defend themselves on this score.

In this chapter I outline a fresh approach to epistemological disjunctivism with a view toward addressing this challenge head on. On the view I want to recommend perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons because the *kind* of knowledge at issue is a species of *judgmental belief* (cf. Sosa 2015). I'll explain this further below. But the initial idea is that it is on account of its providing one with *judgmental perceptual knowledge* that perception provides one with reasons—indeed what are even *factive* reasons—that are the subject's reasons for believing what they do.

Here is the plan for this chapter. In the first section I motivate 'the internalist challenge' for epistemological disjunctivism—which was given rather short shrift earlier. Again, in a nutshell this challenges the disjunctivist to vindicate the supposed internalist insight that she boasts to be able to protect—viz., the notion that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the subject's reasons for believing what she does. Here I highlight especially that nothing that disjunctivists have said so far gives us any good reason to suspect that this is the right way to approach 'everyday' perceptual knowledge. Then in the second section I provide the framework that I rely on for advancing my positive proposal; which, we'll see, entails an epistemological disjunctivism for which the internalist challenge doesn't so much as arise. Here I rely largely on Ernest

Sosa's work in *Judgment and Agency* (2015) to differentiate between what he calls 'judgmental belief' and 'merely functional belief', and to describe more generally what I'll call 'the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge'. Then in the third section I articulate in the context of that conception the sort of epistemological disjunctivism I want to recommend, showing how it overcomes the internalist challenge. I then summarize and point our way to the chapters that follow.

§1. The Internalist Challenge for Epistemological Disjunctivism

Begin by recalling that on Pritchard's view perception is supposed to provide one with knowledge by providing one with factive reasons that are the subject's reasons for believing what it is they know. More specifically, recall, when one knows that p this is because one believes that p for the reason that one sees that p —so that the fact that one sees that p is *the subject's reason* for believing what they do. That is just to say that one's seeing that p functions here as a *motivating reason*.⁵ But now what are those?

If something is your motivating reason then it captures the light in which you took something you did to be appropriate or fitting, given your circumstances (including, importantly, your aims) (cf. McDowell 1978). For example if your reason (i.e. motivating reason) for going to the restaurant is that they have great wine, then it is in light of the fact that they have this wine that you take going *there* to be appropriate or fitting, as opposed to going somewhere else or even nowhere at all. Similarly, if your reason for believing that p is that you see that p then it is in light of the fact that you see that p that you take believing p to be appropriate or fitting, as opposed to, say, disbelieving or suspending judgment on the matter. So then by leveraging motivating reasons in this way Pritchard's reflective epistemological disjunctivism can seem to capture what may be regarded as a key internalist

insight: unlike on typical externalist views, here perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are *subject's* reasons for believing what it is they know.

As the overview provided in the last chapter suggests, Pritchard (2012a) (2016b) has spent most of his energy defending the view against arguments for thinking it *false* (essentially, arguments for thinking that one could not have factive motivating reasons for perceptual beliefs).⁶ But of course that assumes that the view is worth defending in the first place—that in particular there are reasons for thinking it *true* that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons on the basis of which one believes what one does about the world. And yet it is not at all clear what those reasons are supposed to be—something I'll try to bring out presently. This is what constitutes the 'internalist challenge' for epistemological disjunctivism: the challenge to say something to vindicate the supposed internalist insight that they claim their view does well to protect.

So then why think that perception provides us with knowledge by providing us with motivating reasons? What have disjunctivists so far had to say? You will recall from the previous chapter that in motivating their view it is typical for disjunctivists to claim that it simply reflects a face-value assessment of our ordinary justificatory practises—that on that account epistemological disjunctivism represents the common sense or default view for thinking about perceptual knowledge. They will ask us to consider that in response to a challenge to a claim to know something on the basis of perception, one would not ordinarily cite considerations that may be true even if the target belief were false. For example, if I asked you why you thought that there was a tomato on the kitchen countertop it would be odd for you to respond by citing only the fact that this is anyway how things *seem* to you to be at the moment. Rather ordinarily we would expect you to cite something more epistemically robust—"I can see that there is a tomato on

the countertop”—or something that at least entails the presence of a tomato.

In Pritchard’s own words:

“(…) in response to a challenge to a claim to (perceptually) know I might well respond by citing a factive perceptual reason in defense of my claim, which suggests that we do, ordinarily at least, allow factive reasons to offer sufficient rational support for our perceptual knowledge” (2012a, p. 17).

Fair enough. But notice that these practices hardly vindicate the supposed internalist insight at issue. Assuming that we have characterized these justificatory practises fairly, it is not at all clear that they give us good reason to think that perception provides us with knowledge by providing us with motivating reasons for perceptual belief.

First, notice how these practises do not suggest that perceptual beliefs are believed for reasons so much as that *if they are* believed for reasons then these can be as good as factive reasons. After all even if one customarily appeals to some reason in defense of a claim to know something, that need not indicate that one knows that thing in virtue of believing it *for* the reason one cites. For example one might customarily appeal to something like the design argument in defense of a claim to know that God exists. But that need not indicate that one believes that God exists *on the rational basis* of the reasons contained in that argument. More realistically one believes that God exists on the basis of a series of seemingly compelling religious experiences.

But then notice second that even if these justificatory practises were indicative of one’s believing *something* on the basis of a reason, it is not clear why the belief in question should be the perceptual belief that *p* and not the belief that one *knows that p* instead. Notice that even in the excerpt quoted from Pritchard above it is supposed to be in response to a perceived challenge to perceptually *know* that *p* that one commonly cites that one sees that *p* to be the case. But then if this practise is supposed to be indicative of one’s believing something on the basis of a reason, then is it not rather one’s

belief that one knows that p that one believes on the basis of the reason one cites, rather than one's belief that p , contrary to the disjunctivist's proposal?

These are just some reasons to be sceptical that our ordinary justificatory practises vindicate the target internalist insight—that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the subject's reasons for holding the relevant belief.

Very well. But perhaps instead the disjunctivist can vindicate the internalist insight in connection with *epistemic responsibility*. Perception provides one with knowledge for which one can be held responsible. And that is why it provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons for belief.⁷ Unfortunately that quick little argument misfires once we distinguish between *weak* and *strong* forms of epistemic responsibility. The argument assumes that one could be epistemically responsible for one's perceptual knowledge only if one believed the relevant proposition on the basis of good reasons. But there are weaker interpretations of epistemic responsibility that do not require one to believe something motivated by reasons for thinking it true.

Imagine for example that you are so angry that you punch a hole through the wall. There need not be anything that was *your reason* for doing this (for example it need not be that you were trying to stage some kind of diversion). Perhaps you were just really angry. But surely for that you are no less responsible for what you did—not least because you should have paid attention to the reasons *not* to do this (i.e. it is an expensive fix, and now the children are crying and the dog is upset). In this way it seems that you can be held responsible for doing something just so long as your doing it should be *sensitive* or responsive to reasons, even if there was nothing that was your reason for doing it. But then why cannot we be made responsible for our perceptual beliefs in a similar fashion? In particular it seems that we can be made responsible for these short of believing them on the basis of reasons, so long as we are appropriately sensitive to reasons for giving them up or

withholding belief (i.e. to what are called ‘defeaters’). This suggests then that there need not be anything that is your reason for doing something in order to be held responsible for doing it, whatever it is, so long as you are appropriately responsive to reasons (cf. Littlejohn 2015; Greco 2010, chapter 2; Sosa 2011, chapter 2).

The result is that even if it is true that perception provides one with knowledge for which one can be held responsible, it simply doesn’t follow that this need be the robust kind of responsibility that requires that you believe what you do on the basis of reasons rather than the weaker kind that requires that you believe in a way that is only responsive to reasons. We do not yet have a straightforward vindication of the internalist’s supposed insight.⁸

One more try. But does not perception provide one with knowledge that one can be held responsible for *in a particular way*? That is to say does it not provide one with knowledge that one can be made *answerable* for. But if that is the case then it is not clear how one is answerable for their perceptual knowledge if they are only weakly responsible for it as that has been glossed above. Here is the relevant argument modified to reflect answerability: Perception provides one with knowledge for which one can be made answerable for, and that is why it provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the subject’s reasons for adopting the relevant perceptual belief. What should we think of that argument?

Here is the problem. In order to be answerable for something one knows it seems entirely sufficient that one be able to cite *how* one knows what one does. But *explanatory* reasons are not all *motivating* reasons.⁹ That means that we need some further argument to the effect that in the perceptual case the reason one cites is not merely an explanatory reason but is also (or instead) be *the subject’s reason* for adopting the relevant belief. Note that it is not at all clear why that should be the case. For example you seem perfectly answerable for your knowledge that some mathematical proof is correct just so long as you can cite *how* you know it in response to a

challenge. “I worked it out with pencil and paper”—you might say. Yet it is hardly obvious that this is also *your* reason for believing the answer to the proof. (Are not your reasons represented in the various steps of the proof?).

Thus when all is said and done it looks as though epistemological disjunctivism currently labours under what I am calling the internalist challenge. Disjunctivists defend the claim that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with factive reasons that are the subject’s reasons for believing what they do, and thereby claim to protect a key internalist insight about perceptual knowledge. Unfortunately it is not at all clear that there is even an internalist insight here to protect. Why think in the first instance that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons—let alone factive motivating reasons?¹⁰

§2. Introducing the Bifurcated Conception of Perceptual Knowledge

I now want to begin laying the groundwork for the positive proposal of this thesis. On the view I mean to advance, perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons *because* perception provides one with specifically judgmental perceptual knowledge—that is, knowledge that is a species of judgmental belief. In this section I contrast ‘judgmental’ with ‘merely functional’ belief, as these are described in Ernest Sosa’s *Judgment and Agency* (2015), to generate what I will call the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge. Then in the section that follows I’ll describe a new vision for epistemological disjunctivism, which I advance within the context of the framework developed here. I show how this new view overcomes the internalist challenge for epistemological disjunctivism.

In his book *Judgment and Agency* Sosa writes that “we can distinguish between two sorts of ‘belief’, one implicit and *merely* functional,

the other not merely functional, but intentional, perhaps even consciously intentional” (2015, p. 80). He writes later that this distinction has “animal, action-guiding beliefs on one side, and reflective judgments on the other” (ibid., p. 209). For our purposes we are especially interested in what Sosa calls “reflective judgmental belief”. He writes that this kind of belief (...)

“(...) is a disposition to judge affirmatively in answer to a question, in the endeavor to answer correctly (...), reliably enough or even aptly. And this “judgment” that one is disposed to render is a distinctive conscious act or consciously sustained state” (ibid., p. 209).

Elsewhere Sosa adds that these judgmental beliefs are sustained through a “freely adopted evidential policy” on the part of the subject whose judgmental belief it is—a policy sustained through the subject’s *will*, even (ibid., p.210). What this suggests is that on Sosa’s conception it is part of what judgmental beliefs *are* that they depend upon evidence or epistemic reasons for thinking the relevant proposition is true. Since I am most interested in judgmental beliefs in connection with *perception*, it will be helpful to consider a concrete case in this regard.

To that end then imagine that you perceive a tomato on the countertop in the ‘good case’ where everything is normal. What does it mean to believe that there is a tomato before you, where this is a species of what Sosa is calling ‘judgmental’ belief? I take it that on Sosa’s account what that means is that, in this moment, in recognition of good reasons you take yourself to have for thinking that this proposition is true, you sustain a certain *perceptual* evidential policy. This policy requires that upon explicitly considering the proposition that there’s a tomato before you with a view toward affirming it only if you would thereby affirm it knowledgably, you *would* affirm it to yourself with that end in mind.^{11 12} So then by sustaining this judgmental belief under these circumstances it seems that you reveal that you take your perceptual reasons to be good enough to warrant affirming that ‘there is a tomato before me’ with a view toward affirming this knowledgably. It may be

helpful here to contrast yourself with a Pyrrhonian sceptic, for example, who we can easily imagine sustains a very different perceptual evidential policy under these circumstances. Since he would think that his perceptual evidence or reasons are *never* good enough for this kind of free judgmental affirmation, he would have sustained a policy that required suspending on all such matters whenever he explicitly considered them with the relevant aim in mind. Very well then.

Now in addition to your *intentionally* representing that there is a tomato before you when you see one, we should not lose sight of the fact that you also at the same time *merely functionally* represent this proposition as well. According to Sosa these latter merely functional beliefs implicate no such ability as we have underscored above—an ability to freely and intentionally affirm the truth of a given proposition. Rather by occasionally referring to them as ‘animal beliefs’ Sosa suggest that they are the kinds of representational attitudes we may have in common with animals and small children. These, Sosa says, are “passive states that we cannot help entering” (ibid., p. 54). Moreover he says that they are “fully wired-in forms of representing” (ibid., p. 94) that are “acquired automatically” by way of “normal automatic processing” (ibid., p. 53). It is these doxastic states that are principally at issue in action explanation. Plausibly they are what Daniel Dennett conceives of as “deep, behaviour disposing states” that “one’s behaviour is consonant with automatically” (1978, p. 307, 308). They are the sort of beliefs that even the Pyrrhonian relies on, for example, to guide his behaviour when he reaches for the tomato in order to make a sandwich.

In Sosa’s exposition then we find contrasted two kinds of doxastic state. Merely functional beliefs we find ourselves saddled with as a result of the execution of sub-personal cognitive processing. These can manifest themselves in intentional action, independently of any more sophisticated judgmental belief on the part of the subject. These latter sorts of beliefs, by contrast, *themselves* have the look of an intentional action. These are states

of the subject sustained through an act of the will: through the choosing of a policy that requires the subject to affirm or vouch for the truth of a proposition, upon explicit consideration, with the purpose of thereby affirming knowledgably, in light of what the subject takes to be good reasons for doing so. What all this means is that when one sees a tomato one may not merely functionally represent that there is a tomato so that they can reach out and grab for it, but one may also *intentionally* represent that there is a tomato so that they can vouch for its being true.

Now doubtless one might have objections with respect to how these different kinds of belief relate to one another within an individual. To entertain too many of them now would take us too far afield. What I am coming on to—what my main purpose in this chapter is—is to show that by advancing an epistemological disjunctivism within the framework Sosa provides we have an easy way around the internalist challenge that I motivated in the first section. I will consider just one objection, however, if only to motivate Sosa’s framework a bit further.

You might have this question. Perhaps it is not unusual to suggest that human beings believe things in ways that are different from how infants and other non-human animals believe things. Perhaps human beings believe things in ways that are distinctively reflective, even intentional, as Sosa suggests. But why think that we engage in *both* judgmental *and* merely functional belief? Here are at least two independent considerations for thinking so.¹³

First, Michael Frede (1998) suggests that we need to make some such distinction between what we are calling ‘judgmental’ and ‘merely functional’ belief in order to make proper sense of the Pyrrhonian sceptic’s psychology. According to Frede these sceptics really *believed* that they ought to suspend judgment about everything. But obviously they could not have ‘believed’ this in whatever way they were at the same time calling for a general suspension of judgment—not on any charitable interpretation of the Pyrrhonian sceptic.

In order to make sense of this Frede distinguishes “having a view” on a matter from “taking a position” on it. Frede’s idea is that while the Pyrrhonian sceptic believed that he ought to suspend judgment about every matter, this was merely his view, or his impression of things, and not his considered position. After all positions on things are not the kinds of things that we are supposed to have, according to Frede’s Pyrrhonian. Frede also points out that with this distinction in hand we can explain in a similar fashion how the Pyrrhonians were able to go about their lives safely, despite not having any ‘beliefs’. For what it is they never actually had were positions on things. But while it might never have been their official position that, say, a wagon was barrelling down the street towards them, this might easily have been part of their more instinctive view on the world.

Secondly, in his fascinating *Essay in Aid to a Grammar of Assent* (1870) John Henry Newman also provides some motivation for thinking that human beings are capable of adopting two kinds of doxastic attitude. Being himself deeply religious, Newman was puzzled by the fact that so many religious persons could seem to sincerely avow belief in religious propositions that had little if any effect on shaping their behaviour and general attitude toward the world. Such folks seemed to sincerely ‘believe’ statements of religious faith in one sense, and yet clearly not in another. As it is commonly said, they believed sincerely ‘with the head’ but not ‘with the heart’. Well anyway, partly to make sense of this Newman distinguished between *notional* assent and *real* assent—between beliefs in ideas and beliefs in realities—which, if you read the *Grammar*, bear striking similarities to how Sosa distinguishes judgmental from merely functional beliefs, and how Frede distinguishes ‘positions’ from ‘views’.¹⁴

Very well. With our bifurcated conception of human belief now on the table, it is easy to see how this enables at least two species of perceptual knowledge. There is perceptual knowledge that is a species of merely functional belief. And there is perceptual knowledge that is a species of

judgmental belief. We can call perceptual knowledge of the former kind merely functional perceptual knowledge, and perceptual knowledge of the latter kind judgmental perceptual knowledge. Call the package the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge.

With the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge now in tow, we are in position to clearly articulate a new vision for epistemological disjunctivism whose first virtue is that it is entirely inoculated against the internalist challenge. I turn to this now.

§3. A New Vision for Epistemological Disjunctivism: Disjunctivism about Judgmental Perceptual Knowledge

According to epistemological disjunctivism perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons—reasons that are the *subject's* reasons—for adopting the perceptual beliefs at issue. We noted that on that score disjunctivists claim that they protect an important internalist insight to the effect that perceptual knowledge consists in believing something on the basis of good reasons for thinking the relevant belief is true. The challenge for the disjunctivist however is to explain why we should think that perceptual knowledge is at all like that. Why think that it consists in believing something for reasons at all—let alone factive reasons? That is the internalist challenge for epistemological disjunctivism that we motivated in the first section.

I think that part of the reason why the internalist challenge has a grip on epistemological disjunctivism is that so far the view has been *underspecified* in a way that we are now in position to appreciate. Namely it has been underspecified as to whether it has merely functional perceptual knowledge or rather judgmental perceptual knowledge in view. If epistemological disjunctivists leave their critics free to conceive of their target

as a species of merely functional perceptual belief then I think it is no wonder that one should find it mysterious why perception should provide one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons for belief. After all merely functional perceptual knowledge is something we think even animals and small human children can enjoy. And we do not typically think that in order to enjoy such knowledge these subjects need to hold their perceptual beliefs in light of what they take to be good reasons for thinking them true. Or at least in nothing like the way demanded by the kind of robust epistemic responsibility requirement on perceptual knowledge that epistemological disjunctivism seems interested to accommodate.

By contrast notice that if we advance epistemological disjunctivism explicitly in connection with judgmental perceptual knowledge then that is a potential game-changer. Call this idea *epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge*. For if perception provides one not only with merely functional perceptual knowledge by also judgmental perceptual knowledge, too, then it is obvious why perception should provide one with (one kind of) knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the subjects reasons for accepting the relevant proposition. After all we have just seen that to judgmentally believe something just *is* to be disposed toward an intentional performance of a sort that is executed in the light of reasons—in the case at issue, reasons for thinking that by affirming the relevant empirical proposition with the aim of thereby affirming knowledgably, one would thereby succeed. In this way judgemental perceptual beliefs are strictly dispositions to do something for a reason, sustained by very basic *perceptual* evidential policies that, for example, differentiate one from a Pyrrhonian sceptic.

It is rather straightforward, then, how an epistemological disjunctivism about specifically judgmental perceptual knowledge has resources for overcoming the ‘internalist challenge’. There *is* an internalist insight that epistemological disjunctivists are right to protect since in theorizing about the

epistemology of perception is it right to be sensitive to the fact that perception provides one not only with merely functional but also judgmental perceptual knowledge. On our positive proposal, then, it can all be put neatly like this: disjunctivists should think with internalists that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons because the *kind of knowledge* at issue is of a sort for which it's essential that one have motivating reasons for adopting the relevant proposition.

Now it remains to be seen how to fill out the rest of the picture. Epistemological disjunctivism claims that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons. And on our proposal this is because it provides one with judgmental perceptual knowledge. But it is also part of the disjunctivist's picture that these reasons are meant to be *factive* reasons—in particular, reasons in the form of one's seeing that p to be the case. How do I propose that we accommodate these reasons on my proposal?

Well given that we are already trafficking within the context of the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge I think the materials lay close to hand. When you judgmentally believe that p in light of the fact that you see that p to be the case, I want to say that your seeing that p is none other than your perceptually knowing that p on the 'animal' or merely functional level. In other words on this proposal perception provides one with judgmental knowledge that p by providing one with merely functional knowledge that p , where this merely functional perceptual knowledge constitutes one's rational basis for the judgmental knowledge in question.

So for example: in paradigmatic cases, when one sees a tomato and recognizes it for what it is, one comes to merely functionally know that there is a tomato before one (where as far as I can tell this can be given a purely 'externalist' analysis. That is to say that acquiring knowledge on this level need not have anything to do with believing anything on the basis of reasons). But in the paradigmatic case not only do you recognize the tomato

as a tomato, you also recognize it as something you see and thereby know to be a tomato in that merely functional way.¹⁵ Then—as I view things—in light of this recognition you come to sustain a perceptual evidential policy that requires you to affirm that there is a tomato before you upon explicitly considering the matter with a view toward affirming this proposition only if you'd thereby affirm it knowledgably.

That is the picture. That is epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge. It seems to me to be an entirely natural (if slightly over-technical) characterization of what we ordinarily think is going on when we know that there is a tomato before us while staring right at one. We know that it is a tomato. And we recognize that we know this. And that enables a kind of cognitive purchase on the fact that is distinctive of the sort of unique language-using creatures that we are—that goes to comprise what we can conceive of as judgmental perceptual knowledge of the fact.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to cast a new vision for epistemological disjunctivism in light of what has recently emerged as an important new challenge for the view. This is the internalist challenge that we introduced in chapter one and motivated here in greater depth: the challenge to vindicate the supposed internalist insight that epistemological disjunctivism has heretofore seemed only to assume is worth protecting. I argued in this chapter that if we can help ourselves to a framework for thinking about 'belief' that Ernest Sosa has independently motivated, then we can articulate an epistemological disjunctivism that is inoculated against that challenge. This is an epistemological disjunctivism about particularly judgmental perceptual knowledge—the main positive proposal of this thesis.

The big idea is that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the *subject's reasons* for believing what they do insofar as perception provides one with knowledge that is a species

of judgmental belief. Moreover these reasons can be as good as factive reasons—in terms of one’s seeing that p to be the case—on account of the fact that perception *also* provides one with merely functional perceptual knowledge, which is importantly distinct from judgmental perceptual knowledge, for reasons I tried to make clear.

For these reasons I think that there is much to be gained already by adopting an epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge, one that is advanced within the context of the bifurcated conception of perceptual belief. In the next chapter I will argue that our proposal enjoys even further benefits. For it supports a novel solution to what is thought to be the ‘basis problem’ for epistemological disjunctivism—a more attractive solution, I think, than any we know of so far.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ This chapter is largely adapted from my “Epistemological Disjunctivism and the Internalist Challenge” forthcoming in *American Philosophical Quarterly*.

² See for example Pritchard (2012a) (2016a); McDowell (1983) (1995) (2011); and Millar (2010) (2016).

³ For Pritchard this isn’t a general claim concerning the epistemic basis of perceptual knowledge. Rather perceptual knowledge enjoys rational support that’s both factive and reflectively accessible *only in paradigmatic cases*. We assume this throughout.

⁴ See for example Goldberg (2016), Boulton (2017), and Madison (2014).

⁵ A motivating reason is a kind of explanatory reason. All motivating reasons are also *explanatory* reasons. If you believe that p for the reason that you see that p then you believe that p *because* you see that p . Not all explanatory reasons, though, are motivating reasons. You might believe that p as a result of knock on head. But that needn’t imply that this is also *your reason* for believing what you do. For a good discussion of reasons and their various roles, see Alvarez (2010).

⁶ Recall especially the problems we called attention to earlier in chapter one, following Pritchard (2011) (2012a) (2016a), the ‘basis problem’, the ‘indistinguishability problem’, the ‘access problem’, and the ‘assertion’ problem in connection with one’s seemingly being able to *claim* one’s perceptual knowledge in radical sceptical contexts.

⁷ Pritchard (2012a, p. 3-4) writes that because on his view “(...) we have the reflective access to the factors relevant to our epistemic standings [...] we can retain the appeal of epistemic internalism when it comes to the issue of epistemic responsibility.”

⁸ Pritchard (2015, p. 634) seems to miss this point in response to Littlejohn (2015). In response to virtually the same challenge that we have raised here, Pritchard responds:

“Often, however, I think the mature knower exercises an epistemic responsibility of a very different kind, one which does involve reflectively accessible rational support. [...] It is this more robust kind of epistemic responsibility, which is essentially internalist, that I want to capture in my formulation of epistemological disjunctivism.” Right. But the pertinent question is why go through the pains of capturing that robust kind of epistemic responsibility? Why think to begin with that we’re robustly responsible for our perceptual beliefs in this way? “Internalists have always said so” shouldn’t be the desired answer.

⁹ See again footnote 5.

¹⁰ Littlejohn (2016) discusses two other possible arguments for thinking that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with motivating reasons. There isn’t any need to discuss those here since I think they struggle to support their conclusion for the same reasons Littlejohn thinks so. Neta (2009) argues for something *close* to what we are after here—a view he calls ‘reflectionism’. Reflectionism is the view that “if S is a creature capable of inquiry, then: S knows that *p* only if S has a reflectively accessible entitlement to believe that *p*” (ibid., p. 122). However note that it isn’t clear that it follows from the fact that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reflectively accessible entitlements for belief that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons that are the subject’s reasons for believing what he/she knows. And so it isn’t clear that Neta sets out to motivate the same internalist insight under consideration here.

¹¹ In what follows I substitute ‘knowledgeably’ where Sosa would say ‘aptly’. I think this is a safe substitution for our purposes. This is merely to avoid having to address the technicalities of Sosa’s view of aptness with respect to belief, which would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that, on Sosa’s view, an apt belief is not simply both true *and* competently formed, but true *because* competently formed.

¹² This isn’t something you do, for instance, when merely guessing the answer to a question in a game show. Here you might affirm that, say, Columbus sailed in 1492 with the aim of affirming *truly* (after all you want the prize, and you need true answers for that!). But you wouldn’t be affirming to thereby affirm *knowledgeably*, on Sosa’s view. For him a truly judgmental belief isn’t manifested in an intentional truth-aimed affirmation that amounts to a mere guess.

¹³ If it isn’t clear yet, it will become clear in what follows, and especially in the next chapter, why it is important for the sort of epistemological disjunctivism advanced here that human beings go in for *both* judgmental *and* merely functional perceptual beliefs.

¹⁴ For other examples of authors that seem to distinguish between at least two kinds of belief, see Coliva (2016), Dennett (1978), Gendler (2008), and Stevenson (2002), who actually distinguishes up to *six* different conceptions of belief.

¹⁵ Compare Alan Millar (2010) (2011) (2014) (2016). Although while he agrees that, typically, in recognizing a tomato to be a tomato one also recognizes *oneself as recognizing the tomato* for what it is, he doesn’t conceive of this as enabling a kind of *judgmental* perceptual knowledge as we have here.

CHAPTER THREE

Epistemological Disjunctivism about Judgmental Perceptual Knowledge and the Basis Problem

Introduction¹

In the last chapter I argued that epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge enjoys an advantage in connection with answering the so-called ‘internalist challenge’. In this chapter I aim to show that it enjoys advantages besides—particularly in connection with the better-known *basis problem* for epistemological disjunctivism.

Recall that it is a central component of epistemological disjunctivism that one can enjoy rational support for a perceptual belief on the basis of one’s *seeing that p* to be the case. And since seeing that *p* entails that *p* this provides one with a kind of factive rational support that one would not have unless *p* were true. But does not seeing that *p* also entail knowing that *p*? It can seem natural to suppose so on account of its just being *a particular way* of knowing that *p*.² But if that is right then it seems that one can motivate this argument for thinking that epistemological disjunctivism is false:

The Basis Argument Against Epistemological Disjunctivism

- 1) Seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p* on account of simply being a way of knowing that *p*. (*S_wK thesis*).³
- 2) If seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p* in this way, then seeing that *p* cannot be one’s rational basis for knowing that *p*.
- 3) Therefore seeing that *p* cannot be one’s rational basis for knowing that *p*.

This argument expresses what we identified in the first chapter as *the basis problem* for epistemological disjunctivism (cf. Pritchard 2011a, 2012a, 2016a).⁴ There we noted that it is standard for disjunctivists like Pritchard and McDowell to shy away from premise (2) and try to motivate a rejection of premise (1) instead—or the S_wK thesis. Contrary to what we might have thought at first, they argue that seeing that *p* does not entail knowing that *p* since seeing that *p* does not entail believing that *p* (and knowledge entails belief).⁵ This response is familiar to those who know the debate. What remains unclear is what the prospects are for rejecting premise (2) instead. I think that those sympathetic to epistemological disjunctivism have good reasons for investigating those prospects.

First Ghijzen (2015) offers reasons for thinking that we should be suspicious of Pritchard's (2011a) (2012a) case against the S_wK thesis. However Ghijzen's reasons hold up, I think disjunctivists should like to have some idea of how else to avoid the basis problem if not by rejecting the S_wK thesis—if only as a matter of insurance. Secondly, the idea that seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p* on account of simply being the way in which one knows that *p* can seem highly intuitive, or at least very natural to assume (cf. Williamson 2000; Stroud 2009; Cassam 2007; Dretske 1969).⁶ So if it were possible to defend epistemological disjunctivism against the basis problem without having to compromise that idea, that should be a welcome result for anyone interested in pursuing an epistemological disjunctivist approach.

In this third chapter, then, I highlight two strategies for a defense of epistemological disjunctivism against the basis problem that leave the S_wK thesis entirely intact. The first I have mentioned already in passing in chapter one but will be more carefully considered here. This strategy situates epistemological disjunctivism within the context of a 'knowledge-first' approach to the relationship between perceptual knowledge and factive rational support for perceptual beliefs.⁷ This view has going for it that it can

be made to look consistent with the S_wK thesis. That is because, as I explain further below, it puts one in position to reject premise (2) on the basis of its wrongly assuming that we are advancing epistemological disjunctivism in service of a reductive account of perceptual knowledge—reducing it to a kind of rationally supported belief. While this strategy is no doubt suitable for knowledge-firsters, it is not a strategy available to those like Pritchard who (I take it) mean to advance their view in service of an account along just those lines.

I claim that is it just here that our epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge enjoys a unique advantage. For as I'll explain, by invoking the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge introduced in the previous chapter we are afforded a different rationale for rejecting premise (2), one that does *not* depend on having to adopt a knowledge-first approach. This is an advantage of the view because it means that it can be made consistent *both* with the S_wK thesis *and* the thought that we can reduce (one kind) of perceptual knowledge to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief. This will all become clearer in due course.

§1 A Knowledge-First Solution to the Basis Problem

1.1 The Basis Problem for Epistemological Disjunctivism

I begin by reviewing the core of the basis problem for epistemological disjunctivism. As we have just finished saying this problem turns crucially on premise (2) of the argument above: the idea that if the S_wK thesis is true then seeing that p cannot function to rationally support perceptual knowledge that p . But now why is that? What is so difficult about knowing that p on the rational basis of seeing that p if seeing that p entails knowing that p on account of being simply the way in which one knows that p ?

Well the first thing to get clear on is what we mean by *a way of knowing* here. In what sense is seeing that p the way in which one knows that p so that it seems to compromise epistemological disjunctivism in the relevant way? Well certainly it isn't merely that seeing that p is the *means by which* one knows that p . That cannot be the operative conception since something could be a means of acquiring knowledge that p without *entailing* knowledge that p . For example reading that p is a means of acquiring knowledge that p , and yet one could read that p without coming to know anything at all (cf. Cassam 2007). That suggests that so long as seeing that p is a way of knowing that p so that it entails knowing that p , 'way of knowing' here doesn't mean merely that seeing that p is a means of knowing that p . Rather I think we mean here instead something like seeing that p is identical to an item of proposition knowledge, or at least the specific "realization base" of an item of propositional knowledge (cf. French 2014, who is interpreting Williamson 2000). We mean that seeing that p is a way of knowing that p like being red is a way of being coloured.

I think this gives us a clearer idea of how the S_wK thesis makes trouble for the thought that one could know that p on the rational basis of seeing that p . For if seeing that p entails knowing that p on account of being a way of knowing that p in the operative sense, then it seems that seeing that p is just knowing that p in a visual-perceptual way. But what sort of daylight is there between perceptually knowing that p and knowing that p in a visual-perceptual way? The result is that if the S_wK thesis is true it can seem that epistemological disjunctivism is recommending a picture on which one perceptually knows that p on the rational basis of knowing that p in a visual-perceptual way. But is that really any different from an account on which perceptual knowledge is epistemically supporting itself? (cf. Ghijssen 2015).⁸ It can certainly seem to 'presuppose' perceptual knowledge in a way that makes it difficult to see how this is supposed to be an illuminating account of perceptual knowledge.

1.2 A 'Knowledge-First' Strategy

But now notice that perhaps this only *seems* unilluminating because we are imaging in the background that the epistemological disjunctivist is advancing their proposal in service of a traditional reductive account of what perceptual knowledge is. That is, an account that seeks to explicate the *epistemic basis* of perceptual knowledge in terms of the availability of factive rational support, all the while without having to refer to the perceptual knowledge at issue. Certainly seeing that *p* seems ill-suited to serve as the epistemic basis of perceptual knowledge in an account *like that*, so long as seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p* on account of just being the way in which one knows that *p* in the operative sense. Surely that's not an implausible account of what is going on here.⁹ But what if we simply abandon that traditional aspiration? What if instead we advance epistemological disjunctivism as an account *merely* of the rational support available for perceptual knowledge with no view toward reducing perceptual knowledge in terms of the rational support at issue? That would seem to open the way to a rejection of premise (2) on grounds of its resting on the false assumption that we are aiming for a traditional reductive account of the epistemic basis of perceptual knowledge. But how exactly might an epistemological disjunctivism like this work?

Alan Millar (2010, 2011*a*, 2011*b*, 2014, 2016), for example, defends just such a view. For him perceptual beliefs are rationally supported (or 'justified') although *not known* on the rational basis of one's seeing that *p* to be the case.¹⁰ In fact, Millar is explicit that it is in part *because* one perceptually knows that *p* that one enjoys this factive rational support.¹¹ Millar writes that his account:

“(...) reverses the traditional philosophical order of explanation as between knowledge and justification in cases of perceptual knowledge (...). Possession of justification in these cases arises out of what we

know about our environment and about our mode of perceptual access to it” (2011 *a*, p. 238).

For Millar we explicate the epistemic basis of perceptual knowledge *not* in terms of the availability of a rational basis to believe anything, but in terms of exercising certain perceptual recognitional abilities (cf. Millar 2008*a*, 2009, 2010). These are abilities to come to non-inferentially know of things in one’s environment that they are of some kind from the way they look. And so if for example on some occasion one comes to know by seeing that something before one is a tomato, that is because one has exercised an ability to recognize tomatoes as tomatoes from the way they look—*not* because one has exploited some rational basis provided by one’s experience for thinking that it is a tomato.

But now if seeing that something is a tomato is not the *epistemic basis* of one’s knowing that something is a tomato, it might still function as the *rational basis* of one’s knowledge to this effect.¹² Millar insists upon this. But how exactly does that happen? Well on his view when one comes to know that something is a tomato on the basis of seeing one there, one typically exercises *not only* an ability to tell of a tomato that it is a tomato from the way it looks, but also a higher-order ability to tell that one has exercised that lower-order ability. That is, one *also* exercises an ability to tell of a tomato that it is a tomato *that one sees is a tomato* (cf. Millar 2011 *a*, 2011 *b*, 2014, 2016). And so the idea is that in response to the same visual experience one can come to recognize (and so know) not only that something is a tomato, but also that one sees that something is a tomato.

Crucially, this sets the stage for an explanation of how one’s seeing that something is a tomato could serve as one’s rational basis for knowing that it is a tomato. The idea here is that—absent any other reasons—it is only so long as one thinks that one is seeing a tomato that one thinks that there is a tomato before one, so that if one were to abandon the former belief, for any reason, one would abandon the latter as well. Millar’s thought here is that it is

in virtue of helping to *sustain* one's belief that there is a tomato in this way that one's awareness of the fact that one sees that there is a tomato serves as the *rational basis* for the bit of perceptual knowledge that, Millar is happy to allow, is entailed by one's seeing that there is a tomato.¹³

Thus by following Millar in situating epistemological disjunctivism within the context of a 'knowledge-first' approach it seems we are afforded an easy way out of the basis argument against epistemological disjunctivism. There is no need to have to reject the S_wK thesis. For one can motivate a rejection of premise (2) instead. The thought there only *seems* plausible insofar as we are assuming that we are advancing epistemological disjunctivism in service of a reductive account of perceptual knowledge—reducing it to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief. For in that case it does seem that we are relying on perceptual knowledge itself to provide an allegedly reductive explication of the epistemic basis of perceptual knowledge—which does seem clearly illegitimate. By contrast once we abandon that aspiration within the context of the knowledge-first approach it is no longer clear what the relevant problem is supposed to be—in particular why perceptually knowing that *p* cannot furnish its own factive rational support.

Objection: what Pritchard first called the 'basis problem' for epistemological disjunctivism is *not* about whether if the S_wK thesis is true then can seeing that *p* be the rational basis of perceptual knowledge that *p* in a suitably reductive account (even if perhaps this *is* a further 'basis problem' deserving of the name). Rather the main issue concerns whether if the S_wK thesis is true then can seeing that *p* be the rational basis of perceptual knowledge that *p* in *any* account at all (i.e. whatever else we want to say about the sort of account we mean to advance). The thought here is that if one sees that *p* no sooner than believes that *p*, then one cannot believe that *p* on the rational basis of seeing that *p*. But since if the S_wK thesis is true then seeing that *p* entails believing that *p* on account of entailing knowledge that

p , it seems to follow that if the S_wK thesis is true then one sees that p no sooner than one believes that p . The end result is that if the S_wK thesis is true then seeing that p cannot serve as one's rational basis for knowing that p —never mind about whether it is also supposed to serve as one's epistemic basis for knowing that p in a suitably reductive account. There is simply not enough 'space' between seeing that p and knowing that p for that to happen.

While admittedly Pritchard isn't entirely clear about this, I *don't* think that this is the basis problem that he has in mind. First because there is zero textual evidence in support of it. If you read Pritchard's discussions of the basis problem he always couches things in terms of the *epistemic basis* of perceptual knowledge, not the *rational basis* (cf. 2011a, 2012, 2016).¹⁴ Moreover if this were Pritchard's basis problem then you might expect in his discussion of it some mention of the debate surrounding the 'basing relation'—the debate surrounding what it takes to believe something for a reason. But you never see any of that, either. Second because this hardly seems to be a *problem* at all (that is, it seems too easy to answer). It is hardly clear why one cannot believe that p on the rational basis of seeing that p if one sees that p no sooner than one believes that p . The relevant distinction here is between a belief that is *acquired* inferentially and one that is *sustained* inferentially. The assumption is that only beliefs that are acquired inferentially can be believed on the basis of reasons. But why should that be? Why aren't beliefs merely sustained inferentially also believed on the basis of reasons? (Consider again our discussion of Millar's view above). I have to conclude that after all we *do* have the basis problem zeroed in on correctly.

Very well. So this amounts to a nice result for epistemological disjunctivists like Millar who are happy to embrace a kind of knowledge-first approach. Unfortunately this strategy for rejecting premise (2) is unavailable for disjunctivists like Pritchard who seek to advance a form of epistemological disjunctivism more in step with the relevant tradition. So long as we want to

advance the view within the context of an approach that seeks a reductive conception of the nature of perceptual knowledge we will have to find some other way to dispel the impression that if seeing that p is just a way of knowing that p then—if epistemological disjunctivism is true—perceptual knowledge is viciously self-supporting.

Enter in again epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge. Here, too, I think the view pays dividends. For by situating epistemological disjunctivism within the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge introduced in the previous chapter we are afforded an altogether new strategy for rejecting premise (2) of the basis argument against epistemological disjunctivism. We can reject it on grounds different from those considered above—instead we can reject it on grounds that it rests mistakenly on a univocal conception of perceptual knowledge. This is great because it means that we are afforded a conception of epistemological disjunctivism that is not only consistent with the S_wK thesis, but also the thought that (one kind of) perceptual knowledge is reducible to a kind of rationally supported belief.

§2 The Basis Problem and Epistemological Disjunctivism about Judgmental Perceptual Knowledge

Above we noted that one strategy for rejecting premise (2) of the basis argument embeds epistemological disjunctivism within a wider knowledge-first approach to the issues. That route is closed to Pritchard or at least to anyone seeking to advance epistemological disjunctivism in service of a reductive account of perceptual knowledge. At this point it can seem as though we have to make a choice between advancing an account like this and the S_wK thesis. But if we should like to accommodate both then I think that epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is uniquely suited for this. Let me explain.

Recall that our view invokes the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge to the following effect: that perception provides one with specifically judgmental perceptual knowledge that p by providing one with factive reasons in the form of one's seeing that p . Crucially, however, we said that we should think that seeing that p just is a way of knowing that p —that is, *knowing that p on the merely functional level*. On this picture, then, in paradigmatic cases we have judgmental perceptual knowledge being rationally supported on the basis of something that entails only functional perceptual knowledge of the same proposition. We have something that entails perceptual knowledge on one level rationally supporting perceptual knowledge on an entirely different level.

This is crucial first because it means that epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is clearly consistent with the S_wK thesis.¹⁵ It is true that seeing that p entails knowing that p on account of being the visual-perceptual way in which one knows that p . That is because, on our account, this is identical to one's *merely functionally* knowing that p in a visual-perceptual way.

This is crucial secondly because this hardly precludes our advancing epistemological disjunctivism in service of a traditional reductive account of perceptual knowledge—one that explicates the epistemic basis of (at least one kind of) perceptual knowledge without having to refer to the very knowledge in question. After all the target perceptual knowledge is judgmental perceptual knowledge that p . And while it is true that its rational basis is being understood in terms of knowing that p in a visual perceptual way, this is perceptual knowledge *at another level*—viz., merely functional perceptual knowledge that p . The result is that no perceptual knowledge here looks to be viciously epistemically supporting itself. Judgmental perceptual knowledge enjoys rational support on the basis of merely functional perceptual knowledge. And merely functional perceptual knowledge enjoys rational support on the basis of nothing at all—for all we need to be

committed to here. (Although for what it is worth it seems natural to me to think that what one knows at this merely functional level one knows *not* in virtue of there being something that is the subject's reason for believing what they do. We will revisit this point in the final section of this chapter).

So we can see that epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is like Millar's view insofar as it accepts the S_wK thesis without hesitation. But unlike Millar's view it is *also* in the spirit of the sort of view that I think Pritchard means to advance—insofar as it represents a reductive conception of the epistemic basis of (one kind) of visual-perceptual knowledge of the world. Very well. But it remains to be seen how exactly this supports a strategy for undermining premise (2) of the basis argument against epistemological disjunctivism.

Consider again that argument:

The Basis Argument Against Epistemological Disjunctivism

- 1) Seeing that p entails knowing that p on account of simply being a way of knowing that p . (S_wK thesis).
- 2) If seeing that p entails knowing that p in this way, then seeing that p cannot be one's rational basis for knowing that p .
- 3) Therefore seeing that p cannot be one's rational basis for knowing that p .

We are now in position to recognize that premise (2) can be made to look objectionable on grounds *other than* its wrongly assuming that we are aiming for a reductive account of perceptual knowledge. Particularly, if it doesn't mistakenly assume that then it clearly assumes that the *kind* of perceptual knowledge that seeing that p entails is the *very kind* that at the same time it

functions to rationally support. But now that we are equipped with the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge we can expose that as a false assumption. For since we have not only one but *two levels* of perceptual knowledge with which to appeal, we can claim that what is *actually* going on here is that perceptual knowledge on one level is rationally supporting perceptual knowledge on another level entirely: judgmental perceptual knowledge is rationally supported by one's seeing that *p*, and seeing that *p* entails knowledge that *p*, only knowledge that's a species *not* of judgmental but merely *functional* perceptual belief.

Premise (2) then is objectionable on the grounds that it mistakenly assumes that we must operate with a univocal conception of basic perceptual knowledge. But, crucially, once we have made it clear that there are these two levels of perceptual knowledge in play, it seems we have removed any basis for the complaint that if the S_wK thesis is true then perceptual knowledge that *p* can be rationally supported by seeing that *p* only if perceptual knowledge epistemically supports itself in some vicious manner. Thus epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge affords us a strategy for rejecting premise (2) of the basis argument that even disjunctivists like Pritchard can avail themselves of. For unlike Millar's strategy it does not require that we part so drastically with tradition: On our proposal we safeguard the idea that perceptual knowledge (i.e. *judgmental* perceptual knowledge) can be reduced to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief.¹⁶

§3 Can Our Positive Proposal be Reconciled with The Original Motivations Behind Epistemological Disjunctivism?

Very well. Now before shifting in the next chapter to playing defense I'd like to consider and respond to two objections. Both concern whether

epistemological disjunctivism about judgemental perceptual knowledge—as that has been presented here and in the previous chapter—can be reconciled with certain original motivations for epistemological disjunctivism. In this final section I consider and remove what might appear to be grounds for scepticism about that. If nothing else my considering these objections should help to further clarify the view I mean I endorse.¹⁷

First, recall that it is typical for epistemological disjunctivists to motivate their view by claiming that it captures both internalist and externalist insights with regard to perceptual knowledge. But isn't our proposal now in conflict with that ambition, since it allows merely functional perceptual knowledge into the picture—knowledge of a kind that appears to be *thoroughly externalist* in nature? I don't think so. For keep in mind that even if our proposal requires a kind of perceptual knowledge that is thoroughly externalist in this way, this is not the knowledge that it *targets* for a disjunctivist analysis. Rather the relevant target is *judgmental* perceptual knowledge. But then why shouldn't it suffice for capturing the original motivation at issue that our theory of *judgmental* perceptual knowledge accommodate what internalists have complained is missing from typical externalist accounts (i.e. that one should need to have good reasons for accepting what it is they know), and what externalists have complained is missing from typical internalist accounts (i.e. a sufficiently tight connection between epistemic support and the fact known)? But doesn't our account of judgmental perceptual knowledge accomplish just that? Put another way it isn't clear why our proposal cannot be seen to accommodate both internalist and externalist motivations unless it can be seen to accommodate these with respect to *both* merely functional and judgmental perceptual knowledge. For this reason I don't see that our proposal is in any deep tension with epistemological disjunctivism's original aim of providing an account of perceptual knowledge of the world that accommodates core internalist and

externalist insights in epistemology.¹⁸ It does that with respect to perceptual knowledge that is a species of judgmental belief.

Second, some seem to motivate epistemological disjunctivism about perceptual knowledge on grounds that knowledge in general requires a kind of internalist factive rational support (cf. McDowell 1982, 1995, 2011; Littlejohn 2016). But clearly we cannot avail ourselves of this line of motivation once we have allowed for a kind of merely functional perceptual knowledge that need not require ‘internalist’ rational support at all—much less factive rational support. I’d like to say two things in response.

First it is not clear that our proposal *need* conflict with the thought that knowledge in general requires factive rational support. I only said before that I think we are *free* to give merely functional perceptual knowledge a thoroughgoing externalist analysis—that indeed this seems most natural—*not* that we are by any stretch compelled to. For all that I need to commit to here, for example, it may be that merely functional perceptual knowledge *too* enjoys factive rational support. Of course we would not want to say that this rational support can be made available in the form of one’s seeing that *p* to be the case, for that would generate a new kind of basis problem at the deeper level, not to mention multiply notions of ‘seeing that *p*’ well beyond necessity. But it may be open to say instead that one’s rational support for merely functional perceptual knowledge is made available by *the fact that p* itself (cf. Schnee 2016).¹⁹ That is, when you merely functionally know that it is a tomato before you, *that it is a tomato* is your rational basis for merely functionally believing this. In that case we would seem to have an epistemological disjunctivism about merely functionally perceptual knowledge embedded within an epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge. I don’t claim to know of any good reasons for thinking that that should be so. Nor is it a view that I want to endorse. I claim only that it is one way of pursuing the details, a way that is consistent with the thought that perceptual knowledge in general requires factive rational support.

But in any case, secondly, I do not think that you have to think that knowledge in general requires factive rational support in order to motivate epistemological disjunctivism about perceptual knowledge—so that if I cannot ultimately avail myself of this line of motivation then it isn't anything to worry very much over. After all it is not as though you have to think that knowledge in general requires factive rational support in order to begin motivating epistemological disjunctivism. For recall some of the other lines of motivation reviewed in chapter one. Not only can we point to the apparent rapprochement epistemological disjunctivism brings between internalist and externalist thinking about perceptual knowledge, but we can also point to its enabling a unique 'undercutting' anti-sceptical solution to the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem (cf. Pritchard 2016a, p. 132-142).²⁰ Moreover it may be claimed further that epistemological disjunctivism makes the best sense of why acquiring perceptual knowledge that *p* can conclude inquiry into whether *p* in a way that satisfies one's desire to know whether *p* is true, while also enabling one to responsibly vouch for its being the case that *p* (cf. Millar 2010, 2011c). I submit that our epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is no less susceptible of these additional lines of motivation than, say, Pritchard's original account. Thus even if it turns out that our proposal conflicts with the thought that knowledge in general requires factive rational support that would not be particularly devastating for the view.

Conclusion

Perhaps we are used to thinking that so long as the S_wK thesis is true then seeing that *p* could not serve as the rational basis for perceptual knowledge, so that epistemological disjunctivism must therefore try to motivate a rejection of that thesis. Part of what I set out to accomplish in this chapter

was to explore the prospects for an unfamiliar response to this problem: one that avoids the basis problem *without* having to reject the S_wK thesis.

This route scrutinizes rather premise (2) of the basis argument against epistemological disjunctivism: the thought that if the S_wK thesis is true then perceptual knowledge looks self-supporting in some way that must be problematic. We saw that premise (2) only *seems* compelling given one or another assumption: viz., either that the disjunctivist means to pursue a reductive conception of the epistemic basis of perceptual knowledge, or else that she assumes only a univocal conception of basic perceptual knowledge. Interestingly, either one or both of those assumptions may turn out to be false, depending upon how the epistemological disjunctivist chooses to situate her proposal. In particular if she situates her proposal within the context of a knowledge-first approach to the issues then the first assumption turns out to be mistaken. And if she instead situates her proposal within the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge then the second assumption turns out to be mistaken.

Epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge employs the later tactic. In doing so it affords a solution to the basis problem that is particularly slick. For it makes sense of how one can know that *p* on the rational basis of one's seeing that *p*, even if it is the case *both* that the S_wK thesis is true *and* perceptual knowledge is reducible to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief.

Very well. That concludes what I have to say by way of promoting epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge. In the next chapter we move to playing defense. Epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is no less susceptible than original presentations of the view to certain recent challenges. In the next chapter I stage a defense against a particularly important such challenge: what we called in chapter one *the new evil genius challenge* for epistemological disjunctivism.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ This chapter is largely adapted from my 'The Bifurcated Conception of Perceptual Knowledge' forthcoming in *Synthese*.

² In what sense here is seeing that *p* a way of knowing that *p*? Not in Cassam's sense (2007). For in that sense a way of knowing is simply a *means of acquiring knowledge* about

something, and a means of knowing needn't entail knowledge (e.g. reading that *p* doesn't entail knowing that *p*). Rather I think what we mean here is something like seeing that *p* is identical to a piece of propositional knowledge, or realizes propositional knowledge. More on this below. See French (2014) for discussion.

³ The "S_wK thesis" is terminology borrowed from Ghijzen (2015).

⁴ Note that there are ways of formulating epistemological disjunctivism that aren't susceptible to the basis problem. These are formulations on which the rational support at issue isn't characterized in terms of your seeing that *p* to be the case. See for example French (2016) and Haddock (2011).

⁵ See Pritchard (2012*a*) (2016*a*) and McDowell (2002*b*) for this line of response. They try to motivate a rejection of the SwK thesis by describing cases that suggest that it's not obvious that this thesis is supported by our ordinary thought and talk about epistemic seeing. For example, suppose you see a zebra in clear view but suspend judgment on whether there's a zebra since you have a misleading defeater to the effect that it's a cleverly disguised mule. Pritchard and McDowell register the intuition that, after the fact, it'd be perfectly natural for you to describe yourself as having *seen that there was a zebra*, despite your not knowing that there was since you didn't believe that there was a zebra at the time.

⁶ For further arguments for the entailment thesis, see French (2012) and Ranalli (2014). For a case against the entailment thesis see Turri (2010).

⁷ Of course by 'knowledge-first' I invoke the orientation in epistemology that most associate with the vision of Tim Williamson (2000).

⁸ Pritchard (2016*a*, p. 127) writes that at best it would look like "one can appeal to seeing that *p* to *explain how* one knows that *p*, but not to indicate one's epistemic basis for knowing that *p*." Ghijzen (2015, p. 1149) adds that "this would make the perceptual knowledge that *p* literally self-supporting (...)". Thanks to a referee for the journal *Synthese* for helping me to clarify exactly how the SwK thesis makes trouble for disjunctivism.

⁹ Objection: isn't what is going on here *rather* to do with the 'basing relation'? One couldn't possibly believe that *p* for the reason that one sees that *p* if one sees that *p* no sooner than believes that *p*. I don't think that this is the problem at issue. I consider this in more detail later in this subsection.

¹⁰ In terms introduced in chapter one, Millar's epistemological disjunctivism rejects the 'warrant option'. This makes his view importantly different from the sort defended by Duncan Pritchard and (it would seem) John McDowell.

¹¹ Millar writes that "instead of explaining the knowledge as, so to speak, built up from justified belief, we treat the knowledge as what enables one to be justified in believing" (2010, p. 139).

¹² To clarify, by 'epistemic basis' I mean that in virtue of which one knows something. One's 'rational basis' *may* be that in virtue of which one knows something, in which case it will also be one's epistemic basis for that knowledge. But we should allow that one might enjoy a rational basis for their perceptual knowledge, despite one's not *knowing* on the basis of this rational support.

¹³ Compare Millar when he writes: "Since it is constitutive of seeing that there are tomatoes in the basket that I believe that there are, it cannot be that I *come to believe* that there are in response to being apprised of the fact that I see that there are. Rather, I am in a position such that the reason I have to believe plays a role in *sustaining* the belief: were a question to arise as to whether there are tomatoes in the basket I would be liable to resist any suggestion that there are not in view of the fact that I see that there are, and were I to cease to believe that I see that there are then, all else equal, I'd cease to believe that there are" (2011*b*, p. 332-33) (emphasis added).

¹⁴ For example, see again footnote 8.

¹⁵ Indeed, consistent with what *may* be entailment theses at either level of knowledge: consistent *both* with the thought that merely functionally seeing that *p* entails merely functionally knowing that *p*, *and* the thought, if there is one, that judgmentally seeing that *p* entails judgmentally knowing that *p* (perhaps there is no useful concept of ‘judgmentally seeing that *p*’. I don’t myself see any reason to think that there is). What we do have to maintain is that there isn’t a kind of ‘level-bridging’ entailment thesis that is true.

¹⁶ This is why our proposal is also preferable to a view that is *like* Millar’s, with the exception that it offers a *reductive* externalist account of perceptual knowledge. On such a view we have only *one kind* of perceptual knowledge that receives a reductive externalist analysis. But such knowledge is *also* susceptible of further rational support courtesy of one’s seeing that *p* to be the case. Whatever the merits of a view like this, it is not able to sustain what I’m assuming is the relevant advantage secured by our proposal—viz., that it’s consistent with the ambition of offering a *certain* reductive account of perceptual knowledge: one that reduces perceptual knowledge to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief. I’m claiming that only a disjunctivism that integrates the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge is able to sustain that advantage without compromising on the SwK thesis. Thanks to a referee for the journal *Synthese* for encouraging me to make this clearer.

¹⁷ Thanks to a referee for the Journal *Synthese* for bringing these concerns to my attention.

¹⁸ Perhaps *this* is the thought behind the worry. Of course our proposal *can’t* claim for itself that it’s able to reconcile both internalist and externalist insights with respect to perceptual knowledge, *so long as* these are supposed to be insights into just *any kind* of perceptual knowledge whatsoever. Not if we allow merely functional perceptual knowledge to take a thoroughly externalist analysis (i.e. with *no* ‘internalist’ admixture). But then why think that? Why think that the externalist’s *and* internalist’s insights are real insights into just any kind of perceptual knowledge that there may be? Thanks to a referee for the journal *Synthese* for stimulating me to think about this some more.

¹⁹ We will return to consider Schnee’s proposal in a different connection in chapter five.

²⁰ We will return to consider this sceptical problem in more detail in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Defense of Epistemological Disjunctivism Against ‘The New Evil Genius’ Challenge

Introduction¹

By now we have in view a new vision for epistemological disjunctivism, as well as reasons for thinking it an improvement over original presentations of the view. The positive proposal has judgmental perceptual knowledge that p enjoying factive rational support on the basis of something that is the way in which one merely functionally knows the proposition at issue. In the second chapter I introduced this view arguing that it scores points in connection with vindicating the kind of epistemic internalism epistemological disjunctivism so clearly aligns itself with. And in the third chapter I argued that it scores points in connection with motivating a more attractive solution to the basis problem for epistemological disjunctivism—one that is unique insofar as it is consistent both with the S_wK thesis and the thought that (at least one kind of) perceptual knowledge is reducible to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief.

In this chapter I switch to playing defense. Here I want to defend the view against the so-called ‘new evil genius’ challenge introduced in chapter one. Originally this challenge was raised against *reliabilism* about perceptual justification (cf. Lehrer and Cohen 1983). According to this view perceptual beliefs are justified only if produced by a reliable belief-forming process.² The problem is that since initially none of the beliefs of a radically deceived BIV seem to be produced by a reliable belief-forming process, this entails that none of these beliefs are epistemically justified. This is meant to be problematic since many internalists think it *obvious* that such beliefs are epistemically justified (indeed justified by virtue of the fact that in such cases

a BIV has every reason one has in the good case for accepting one's perceptual beliefs). Reliabilists about epistemic justification, then, seem faced with the problem of explaining what otherwise seems like a compelling thought: that one's perceptual beliefs in the bad case are no less justified than one's perceptual beliefs in the corresponding good case.

Epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge faces a version of the same problem.³ We noted in chapter one that epistemological disjunctivism in its original form is defined in opposition to the NEG thesis—owing to its making available *factive* rational support in the good case (rational support one obviously does *not* have in the corresponding introspectively indistinguishable bad case). But since our view is no different in this respect that means that we owe some explanation why it can seem that one is no less justified in the bad case than in the good case, if not because one's rational support isn't any less strong in the bad case than in the good case. Put another way: if we shouldn't think that (judgmental) perceptual beliefs in the good and bad cases are equally justified because they enjoy equal rational support, *why else* should we be led to think in this direction? We owe some alternative explanation of the intuitions that seem to give rise to the NEG thesis.

In matter of fact I think that providing a comprehensive response to the new evil genius challenge is slightly more complicated. That is because I think that the new evil genius challenge is best conceived in terms of two component challenges for epistemological disjunctivism. There is the *first-order* challenge and also the *diagnostic* challenge. The first-order challenge invites the epistemological disjunctivist to explain the relevant new evil genius intuition in a way that is clearly consistent with epistemological disjunctivism—that is, consistent with its being the case that one has much better rational support in the good case than in the corresponding bad case for adopting a given (judgmental) perceptual belief. The diagnostic challenge, on the other hand, invites the epistemological disjunctivist to provide some

error theory: some explanation why from the epistemological disjunctivist's point of view classical internalists are misled to accept the NEG thesis in response to seemingly intuitive judgments about epistemic justification in pairs of good and bad cases. Let's say that the first-order challenge and the diagnostic challenge together comprise the new evil genius challenge for epistemological disjunctivism.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I clarify how we ought to think of the relevant intuition driving the first-order challenge, before bringing the reader up to speed regarding the state of the relevant debate between epistemological disjunctivists and their antagonists. Then in the second section I seek to advance that debate by providing a better solution to the relevant first-order challenge. I argue that it is open to epistemological disjunctivists to claim that what their detractors confuse for parity of rational support between pairs of good and bad cases is actually something closer to parity with respect to epistemic *responsibility* and/or *reasonability*, which I clarify further below. Finally in the third section I tackle the diagnostic challenge. There I venture to suggest that the reason classical internalists are prone to sign up to parity of rational support (and not merely responsibility and/or reasonability) is because they are more generally influenced to secure a certain *vindictory* conception of the rational support available for ordinary perceptual (judgmental) beliefs. I then summarize what we have said and point our way to the final chapter.

§1 The New Evil Genius 'First-order' Challenge: The Current Debate

1.1 The New Evil Genius Intuition

Before engaging the first-order challenge directly I think we need to get clearer on the relevant intuition in play. I think it is helpful if we conceive of

the pre-theoretic judgment about epistemic justification that the classical internalist thinks we ought to have when reflecting upon pairs of good and bad cases as the new evil genius *intuition*. What exactly is this intuition supposed to be?

Brent Madison (2014, p. 66) writes in this connection that when considering a good case subject and her radically deceived counterpart in the bad case “internalists point out the intuitive plausibility of holding that the counterparts are equally justified in believing as they do: their beliefs are justified to the very same *extent*, sharing sameness of justificatory status” (note that for the purposes of adapting Madison’s discussion to our own we should read ‘beliefs’ here as ‘judgmental beliefs’).⁴

Now I am going to suggest that we cash Madison’s thought out slightly differently: in terms of ‘sameness of *some* epistemic status’, rather than ‘sameness of justification’. Why? Well first because otherwise it seems we come dangerously close to prejudging the relevant issue in favor of the classical internalist and against the epistemological disjunctivist. To expect the epistemological disjunctivist to explain why perceptual beliefs are just as much justified in the bad case as they are in the good case in a way that is consistent with their view—that is, consistent with one’s having *worse* reasons in the bad case—nigh looks to be expecting the impossible. If this is the intuition then it seems fairly close to the intuition simply that epistemological disjunctivism is false. Secondly because I think Williamson (*forthcoming*, p. 3) is correct when he writes that “epistemic justification is manifestly technical terminology”, and that “we should be correspondingly suspicious of claims to make pre-theoretic judgments about its application.” Note also that I don’t mean to suggest here that ‘epistemic status’ is any kind of natural language equivalent to ‘justification’. Rather I only intend for it to stand as a kind of placeholder term: indicating *whatever positive epistemic status* might be shared between a subject in the good case and a subject in the corresponding bad case—whatever it is that drives the classical

internalist to think that these subjects are equally justified in sustaining their perceptual judgments.⁵

Here then is the thought behind the new evil genius intuition, reformulated in the relevant way. Call it the ‘parity intuition’:

Parity Intuition

Upon considering the way in which subjects sustain their perceptual judgments in pairs of good and bad cases it seems unassailable that these judgments share some positive epistemic status—some normative quality or other relative to the aims of truth-seeking.

The parity intuition drives our antagonist—whom we are here glossing as the ‘classical internalist’—to subscribe to a parity thesis about rational support in the good and bad cases (also called the new evil genius thesis). They think that—as Madison writes—the “best explanation” of the parity intuition, or the “lesson to be drawn”, is that one has every bit as much “information to go on” in the bad case as in the good case for sustaining suitable perceptual judgments (cf. Madison 2014, p. 67). In short they adopt the NEG thesis as the best explanation for the parity intuition.

Of course this is an explanation that an epistemological disjunctivist cannot opt for on pains of giving up her position. By now we know well that epistemological disjunctivism is committed as a matter of principle to there being a radical difference between the rational support one enjoys in the good case and the rational support one enjoys in the bad case for sustaining perceptual judgments to the effect that something is so (recall that in the good case one sustains the relevant judgmental belief for the reason that one *sees that p*, while in the corresponding bad case at best one’s reason is the fact that one seems to see that *p*). Therefore epistemological disjunctivism owes some alternative explanation of the parity intuition: an explanation that is

1) consistent with the relevant *disparity* in rational support that exists between good and bad cases, and 2) isn't otherwise obviously problematic. This to my mind is a more perspicuous characterisation of the relevant first-order challenge for epistemological disjunctivism.

At this point it may be tempting to invoke some form of *blamelessness* as a first stab answer to the first-order problem. In any case that is what epistemological disjunctivists have been wont to do. But in fact we must do better. I'll motivate this in the next subsection at the same time that I summarize where the relevant debate is at.

1.2 The Current Debate: Featuring Epistemic Blamelessness

In response to the first-order challenge it has been standard fare for epistemological disjunctivists and fellow travellers to invoke *blamelessness*. A subject in the bad case invites no more impunity than does the subject in the corresponding good case for sustaining the relevant perceptual judgment. Both subjects are equally above reproach. Here again is Duncan Pritchard (2012a, p. 42):

“[...] epistemological disjunctivists are [not] obliged to argue that there isn't an internalist epistemic standing which is common to both the subject and her envatted counterpart. In particular, it is widely noted about the subjects in the new evil genius example that one epistemic standing they share is that they are equally *blameless* in believing as they do.”⁶

To help us think this through in terms of a concrete case, imagine again that you are seated down at a table upon which sits a bright red tomato. Imagine also that you have a non-factive mental state duplicate whose situation seems exactly the same as yours 'from the inside', except they are *not* seated down at a table upon which sits a bright red tomato. Rather it's only that their brain is being stimulated in all the right ways so as to perfectly

simulate this experience. Assume they are a BIV firmly ensconced in the bad case. On the proposed solution to the first-order problem under consideration, we are to imagine that your radically deceived nonfactive mental state duplicate, like you, is faultless for sustaining the relevant perceptual belief. And that is meant to exhaust whatever force there is behind the parity intuition.

Now the first thing to notice is that it cannot be only *general* blamelessness that is at issue here. The parity intuition, after all, concerns sameness of some *epistemic status* between subjects in pairings of good and bad cases. It is supposed to be that subjects in the good and bad case share some positive evaluative status that is in some way relevant or conducive to attaining the truth on the matter at issue. But it is hardly clear how one's being exempt from general blame translates into an epistemic evaluation of these subjects in the relevant way. Therefore it must be that we have something like *epistemic* blamelessness in mind here.

Very well. But here is an initial problem with invoking epistemic blamelessness in service of a solution to the first-order problem. If it were specifically *epistemic* blamelessness that engendered the parity intuition then it seems that someone would have to be confused to both accept the force of the parity intuition while opposing the existence of epistemic obligations. Here is why. 'Blamelessness' is certainly an inherently deontic notion—of a piece with 'obligation' and related notions of duty fulfilment. Plausibly it makes little sense to attribute epistemic blamelessness to subjects without assuming somewhere in the background the existence of genuine epistemic obligations with respect to which the subjects in question are being held blameless in relation to. But then for this reason it seems misconceived to invoke epistemic blamelessness in service of a solution to the first-order new evil genius challenge. Ideally in overcoming this challenge the disjunctivist shouldn't have to represent things such that anyone who finds the parity

thesis compelling is thereby implicitly committed to the existence of epistemic obligations.⁷

More than that Madison (2014) argues that we have still further reason to be suspicious of any purported solution to the first-order challenge that invokes only epistemic blamelessness. Madison invites us to compare subjects in the bad case not with their epistemic counterparts in the good case, but with various other bad case subjects. To this end Madison has us consider a small crew of subjects whom he calls Al, Al*, Bert, and Carl.

Al and Al* are our good case and bad case counterparts respectively, in the standard pairing of good and bad cases. We can imagine that both Al and Al* sustain a perceptual judgmental belief to the effect that there is a tomato on the table before them for the reason that, as they think, they can see that there is a tomato on the table (while this isn't the example Madison uses, it captures the same point). Bert unfortunately has been horribly brainwashed so that he also sustains a perceptual judgment to the effect that there is a tomato before him, except not on the basis of the reason that he sees that there's a tomato, but for unspecified reasons to do with his brainwashing. Finally Carl is your typical brain lesion victim who sustains the same judgmental belief although for neither of the above reasons. He thinks that there is a tomato on the table before him because he smells freshly cut grass (the implication throughout is that only Al enjoys a true belief—although this is immaterial). Here then is our group:

Al: Typical good case subject in ordinary circumstances.

Al*: Al's counterpart in the corresponding bad case who is a radically deceived BIV.

Bert: Brainwashed BIV victim, who believes poorly owing to his brainwashing.

Carl: Brain lesion BIV victim, who believes poorly owing to his smelling freshly cut grass.

Madison notes that each of these subjects seem above reproach for sustaining their visual-perceptual judgmental beliefs in their respective circumstances. But, crucially, although each of these subjects seem epistemically blameless in this way, Al and Al* seem to be doing *better* epistemically than either Bert or Carl. It seems as though there is something more to be said about the way that Al and Al* sustain their perceptual judgmental beliefs—something that cannot be said of either Bert or Carl.

Madison writes:

“While all are blameless in believing as they do, surely Al and Al* have *better* rational support for their beliefs than Bert or Carl do: they hold their beliefs on the basis of evidence which they take to support the truth of what is believed, whereas Bert and Carl do not” (2014, p. 68).

Thus Madison takes these comparative judgments to mitigate against the plausibility of suggesting that “mere blamelessness is what the internalist confuses for justification in the demon world” (ibid., p. 68). That seems misconceived if the intuitive judgment here is correct: that Al and Al* both enjoy some superior epistemic standing to that of either Bert or Carl. For if we insist that Al and Al* are only both epistemically blameless for sustaining their judgmental perceptual beliefs then that seems to leave us hamstrung to draw the relevant distinctions between Al*, Bert, and Carl. In other words if the best positive epistemic evaluation we can offer Al* is that of sustaining his judgmental belief blamelessly then we are bereft of concepts for putting him in a better light than his brainwashed and lesion suffering comrades—contrary to intuition.

That gives the reader some idea of where the debate is now between epistemological disjunctivists and their internalist detractors. For these reasons it seems eminently plausible that the parity intuition reflects a stronger kind of epistemic agreement between subjects like Al and Al* than mere epistemic blamelessness. I think a more suitable response to the

relevant first-order question should avoid these difficulties. First, it shouldn't entail that one cannot be moved to accept the parity thesis without being implicitly committed to substantive theses regarding epistemic deontology; and second it should furnish what we need for explaining why subjects like Al and an AI* are better poised epistemically with respect to their perceptual beliefs than subjects like Bert and Carl. In the next section I move to advance this debate by venturing a fresh response to the first-order challenge on behalf of the epistemological disjunctivist.

§2. Answering the First-order Challenge

2.1 Epistemic Responsibility and Reasonability

How else then might the epistemological disjunctivist explain the parity intuition if not by invoking mere epistemic blamelessness? Why else should it seem that in pairs of good and bad cases subjects share some kind of positive epistemic support for sustaining their perceptual judgments, if not because they enjoy the same rational support in each case?

Consider first that while perceptual judgments may enjoy one kind of positive epistemic status by virtue of being sustained on the basis of adequate reasons, surely they can enjoy another kind by virtue of being sustained out of an *epistemically virtuous character*. What makes for an epistemically virtuous character is the focus of virtue responsibilists. *Virtue responsibilism* (cf. Zagzebski 1996) is typically distinguished from *virtue reliabilism*.⁸ While for virtue reliabilists epistemic virtues are typically associated with reliable cognitive faculties or mechanisms or even skills, for

virtue responsibilists these are typically associated with acquired and enduring character traits, or person-level dispositions to be motivated to conduct one's life as a truth-seeker in a particular way (cf. Battaly 2008).

It is important to note that it is highly contentious whether epistemic character virtues require that one be disposed *reliably* to find out the truth in a given domain of inquiry.⁹ It is important because if reliability is unnecessary for possessing a given epistemic character virtue then there is no reason to think that one couldn't possess and even exercise these virtues in bad cases where one is radically deceived. In that case one might possess a full compliment of responsibilist character virtues in the bad case just as much as in the good case.

I submit then that beyond mere epistemic blamelessness we should think that subjects in pairs of good and bad cases are *equally trait-level virtuous* for sustaining their perceptual judgments. AI* for example is no less trait-level virtuous than AI for sustaining a perceptual judgment to the effect that there is a tomato on the table. AI* is no less epistemically responsible than AI for maintaining his perceptual judgment in this way. It is open to epistemological disjunctivists to claim that the parity intuition is an intuition about *epistemic responsibility* in pairs of good and bad cases.

I should be clear here that the claim is not merely that subjects in good and bad cases *possess* epistemic character virtue in equal measure. Rather the claim is that by sustaining their perceptual judgments in the relevant way they also *exercise* or manifest this virtue in equal measure. I think we need to say that because the parity intuition is explicitly an intuition about *perceptual judgments* in pairs of good and bad cases—that the judgments themselves share some positive epistemic status. It is not an intuition, I take it, about epistemic characters conceived in isolation from the perceptual judgments these characters help to sustain.

Objection: But *how* exactly do subjects in pairs of good and bad cases manifest their epistemic character virtue in believing as they do—especially

given that the target belief at issue is a simple ‘everyday’ perceptual belief? For notice that it is not as though in coming to form perceptual beliefs subjects must go through some sustained process of investigation. But then do epistemic character virtues really have application in this context?

Well first recall that on the account we are defending it is specifically *judgmental belief* that is issue, which we glossed in chapter two as a disposition sustained on the basis of a perceptual evidential policy to freely affirm the truth of a proposition with the specific aim to thereby affirm knowledgably. But now consider for example a paradigm epistemic character trait like conscientiousness, an essential component of which is to be motivated to believe that p only if p . Now insofar as we have perceptual judgmental belief in view, I think it should be relatively clear how in sustaining such a belief a subject in either the good or bad case can manifest epistemic conscientiousness. For consider that if epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is true then in either case the subject sustains the relevant perceptual judgment that p for the reason that, as she thinks, she can *see that* p is the case. But then ask yourself: Is there a better indication that one is motivated to believe that p only if p if one sustains a perceptual judgment that p on the basis of a consideration that, if true, *entails* the proposition in question? Now granted the subject in the bad case is always *wrong* that they see that p . But we are already allowing that you needn’t be reliable in order to possess and at times exercise a full compliment of epistemic character virtues—including epistemic conscientiousness. Even though it’s false that one sees that p in the bad case, that needn’t preclude that one sustains a perceptual judgment that p *for the reason that one sees that* p in some respectable sense, thereby manifesting one’s epistemic conscientiousness. Shouldn’t we allow anyway that subjects can believe things on the basis of *bad* reasons?¹⁰ Very well.

Now notice that by invoking epistemic responsibility in explanation of the parity intuition we explain that intuition in a way that both avoids

becoming entangled in epistemic deontology and is consistent with there being *disparity* in rational support between the good and bad cases—just as the epistemological disjunctivist needs. We can imagine that the subject in the bad case possesses an impeccable epistemic character. But we shouldn't think that that secures her against thinking that she is in possession of factive rational support when she is not. And should that be so surprising? After all we are assuming that in the bad case one is epistemically *doomed*. Is it so strange to think that in epistemically abysmal circumstances like these one can through no fault of their own be tricked into thinking that one has rational support for adopting a given perceptual belief that one doesn't in fact have?

It remains to be seen whether this also offers the epistemological disjunctivist some response to the challenge Madison raises above: whether we can appeal to epistemic responsibility (or the manifestation of trait-level virtue) to help illuminate what seems like an important epistemic difference between AI's and AI*'s perceptual judgments on the one hand, and brain-washed Bert's and lesion suffering Carl's on the other.

Take Carl's case first, then. Remember that Carl, thanks to his suffering a brain lesion, sustains a perceptual judgment to the effect that there's a tomato before him not because he sees a tomato, but because he smells freshly cut grass (I take it that we are supposed to imagine that Carl doesn't know that he has a brain lesion and that it's because he smells freshly cut grass that he sustains his perceptual judgment). It seems as though there is an easy interpretation of Carl's case according to which AI* *but not Carl* manifests the relevant epistemic character virtue in sustaining his perceptual judgment—so that by appealing to trait-level epistemic virtue we *are* able to distinguish AI*'s (and AI's) case from Carl's as is required.

For consider again a trait like epistemic conscientiousness. Consider that if like AI* Carl were even remotely conscientious then he would *not* go on sustaining a perceptual judgment to the effect that there is a tomato before

him, given his circumstances. Rather in such case he would give up this judgment, recognizing how highly epistemically irresponsible it is to think that there is a tomato before one absent any good reason one takes oneself to have for thinking that this is true. Therefore by sustaining his perceptual judgment in the teeth of things, in this way, Carl reveals that he does *not* sustain his perceptual judgment out of the same virtuous character as does Al*. In short either lesion-suffering Carl acts out of the same virtuous disposition as Al* and we don't have a case (since he suspends judgment), or he does not and while we then do have a case, we can distinguish this case from Al*'s case by invoking trait-level epistemic responsibility. Either way, we avoid the sort of problem Madison raises about Carl in connection with invoking mere epistemic blamelessness in order to explain the parity intuition.

However, while the manifestation of trait-level virtue may fit the bill for distinguishing between Al* and Carl in this way, it isn't so clear that it does the job distinguishing between Al* and brainwashed Bert. For even if we imagine Bert suffering the most abusive epistemic upbringing that needn't entail that he is any less conscientious or concerned about the truth of things than Al*, even if it does entail that he has all the wrong ideas about which considerations count in favor of believing a given proposition. For example perhaps owing to his brainwashing Bert sustains a perceptual judgment to the effect that there's a tomato before him for the reason *not* that he sees a tomato before him but for the reason that he sees a computer instead (we can imagine that Bert has been indoctrinated to believe that all computers house tomatoes). Now even if his seeing a computer isn't *in fact* a good reason for thinking this is true, it is still a consideration *he thinks* is a good reason for thinking this is true. And with the background suitably filled in like this I can't see why in sustaining his judgment about the tomato Bert cannot manifest just as much of a concern for the truth about whether there is a tomato before him as Al* does.

Thus if in offering an explanation of the parity intuition the epistemological disjunctivist needs to invoke some positive epistemic status that makes for the relevant difference between not only Al*'s and Carl's perceptual judgment, but Al*'s and Bert's, too, then more will have to be said. We should like to have something to appeal to in addition to trait-level virtue in order to account for the relevant difference. The first-order challenge is not yet settled.

Thankfully, I think that there is an intuitive notion of *reasonability* in the offing. I think it is available for the epistemological disjunctivist to say that *not only* can subjects in pairings of good and bad cases manifest the same degree of trait-level epistemic virtue, but also the same degree of reasonability. In sustaining their perceptual judgments both subjects believe as the reasonable person would believe, where, following Jonathan Sutton (2005), we can think of the reasonable person as "one whose belief-forming faculties and habits (e.g. inferential habits) are such as to deliver knowledge when conditions are right" (p. 373). For example while seeming to see a red tomato both Al and Al* come to sustain the perceptual judgment that there is a tomato before them for the reason that, as each thinks, they can *see that* there is a tomato before them. But then notice that when conditions are right—as they are for Al but *not* for Al*—this is a habit that generates judgmental perceptual knowledge.

Crucially however in sustaining his perceptual judgmental belief brainwashed Bert follows no such 'reasonable' process. For even when conditions are optimal one couldn't enjoy judgmental perceptual knowledge that there is a tomato before one by following Bert's bad belief-sustaining habit. One couldn't come to know that there is a tomato before one (only) by believing this for the reason that one sees a computer. Thus Bert does not exercise a belief-sustaining habit such that by following that habit he would come to have judgmental perceptual knowledge of the target proposition.

Unlike Al's and Al*'s perceptual judgments, then, Bert's perceptual judgment is not a reasonable one.¹¹

At last I think that we have landed on a suitable solution to the relevant first-order new evil genius challenge. Beyond mere epistemic blamelessness, epistemological disjunctivists should think that a subject is no less epistemically responsible nor reasonable for sustaining perceptual judgments in the bad case than in the good case.¹² I submit that these are the positive epistemic statuses that motivate the parity intuition. That subjects in good and bad case pairings enjoy these positive epistemic statuses to the same degree is consistent with their differing with respect to rational support, *and* these are positive statuses that one can recognize without having to implicitly commit to the existence of epistemic obligations. Finally, these are status with respect to which we can make sense of Madison's additional intuitions regarding Al, Al*, Bert and Carl.

I think that this advances the debate between epistemological disjunctivists and classical internalist over the parity intuition. The reason why we might feel compelled toward the intuitive judgment that the classical internalist wants us to make when reflecting upon pairs of good and bad cases is that these cases feature perceptual judgments that are sustained in ways that are equally epistemically responsible and equally reasonable. *Not* because there exists the same level of rational support in each case. That in my view is how the epistemological disjunctivist ought to explain the parity intuition. And that seems to me like a satisfactory answer to the relevant first-order challenge.

2.2 Two Objections

Before moving ahead to address the diagnostic challenge I would like to address two objections.¹³

First, the classical internalist may question the motivation for epistemological disjunctivism on the following grounds: Why think that it's because of a difference in *rational support* that in pairs of good and bad cases one subject knows while the other does not? After all, there are so many other ways of explaining why the subject in the bad case fails to know—ways that *need not* entail that his or her rational support is any worse than the rational support available in the good case. For example we can imagine all kinds of pairs of good and bad cases in which subjects enjoy equal rational support, but the subject in the bad cases fails to know since his or her belief is false, or perhaps not believed on the basis of the relevant rational support, or is maybe 'Gettiered', or suffers from some other form of knowledge-undermining epistemic luck. But then why think that it is because of a difference in rational support that the subject in the relevant bad case fails to know what our subject in the good case does?

I think that we can easily recognize by now that this simply misunderstands the motivation behind epistemological disjunctivism. No one has tried to motivate epistemological disjunctivism on the grounds that it provides the best explanation why in the relevant pairs of good and bad cases one subject knows while the subject who is radically deceived does not. (For the motivations behind epistemological disjunctivism, see again chapter one).

But there is something else to be said in this connection. In predicting a difference in rational support between subjects in pairs of good and bad cases epistemological disjunctivism may be seen to have an advantage over classical internalism in the following way. Consider that the subject in the relevant bad case is supposed to be in the most dire, most abysmal epistemic circumstances imaginable. In no uncertain terms these subjects are truly epistemically doomed. It might be seen, then, as a *strength* of epistemological disjunctivism that it accentuates this fact by predicting that subjects in bad cases are not only misled in their *perceptual* judgements, but

also in their *epistemic* judgments—their judgments about what reasons they have to sustain their perceptual judgmental beliefs. By contrast those who like classical internalists subscribe to the NEG thesis might be accused of painting *too rosy* a view of subjects who are by everyone’s admission epistemically doomed. The classical internalists thinks that even in the worst epistemic conditions imaginable, *at least* one has a grip on the reasons one has for sustaining their perceptual judgments.

Here is a second objection we might consider. The classical internalist might agree with us that subjects in pairs of good and bad cases are equally trait-level virtuous and reasonable in the ways that I suggest in sustaining their perceptual judgments. But, she will continue, it is just plain *obvious* when reflecting upon pairs of good and bad cases that the subjects involved *also* enjoy equal rational support.

In response however this isn’t so much an *objection* to epistemological disjunctivism as it is a strategy for insulating classical internalism against its detractors. Epistemological disjunctivists will simply deny that it seems intuitively obvious that the NEG thesis is true when reflecting upon pairs of good and bad cases. Not only that, I think the epistemological disjunctivist can tell a story about why classical internalists are mistakenly prone to read the NEG thesis into the parity intuition. I come on to this in the next section where I address the second of the two challenges associated with the new evil genius challenge: viz., the diagnostic challenge.

§3 Answering the Diagnostic Challenge

When reflecting upon perceptual judgments in pairs of good and bad cases it seems highly intuitive that there is some positive epistemic status such that one’s judgment enjoys it in one case only if it enjoys it in the other. That in so many words is the parity intuition. The classical internalist thinks that in registering this intuitive judgment we are being sensitive to the *rational*

support available in each case—so that it must be that the rational support available for perceptual judgments in the good case is no better than the rational support available in the bad case (NEG thesis). The epistemological disjunctivist absolutely must disagree. The first order challenge invites the disjunctivist to provide some alternative explanation of the parity intuition—some alternative account of what it is we are being sensitive to in our evaluations of pairs of good and bad cases. This we did in the last section. But the most comprehensive answer to the new evil genius challenge should also do more. It should also provide some error theory, or answer what we have called the ‘diagnostic challenge’: what moves the classical internalist to think that it must be sameness of rational support at issue in the parity intuition, and not merely sameness of epistemic responsibility and/or reasonability as the epistemological disjunctivist might maintain? Moreover, why is this strain of thinking misguided? Why should it be resisted? I tackle this in this section.

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, I suspect that the reason why the classical internalist is moved to accept the NEG thesis about rational support in light of the parity intuition is *because* they are influenced from outside their thinking on this issue by a tempting idea about what an account of rationally supported perceptual knowledge is supposed to be. The idea I think is rooted in a familiar anti-sceptical desideratum: that whatever one’s rational support for a perceptual belief is, it should be permissible to cite that rational support in defense of one’s belief *without begging questions* against the radical sceptic. The hope here is to secure a certain *vindicating* conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge, according to which the rational support at issue is such that one might appeal to it in order to vindicate one’s perceptual beliefs in the required way.¹⁴

Notice immediately that on this interpretation epistemological disjunctivism *does not* secure a vindicating conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge. For the rational support at issue—i.e. one’s seeing

that p to be the case—is clearly not such as to be citable in radical sceptical contexts without begging questions against the radical sceptic. For if the sceptic is correct that one is a BIV, for example, then one would not have the fact that one sees that p available to cite in defense of a judgmental belief that p .

By contrast notice that information that is made available in both good and bad cases *is* suitable for featuring in a vindictory conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge. For since the bad case is defined so that one is radically cut off from the external world in just the way the radical sceptic proposes, by citing information available in both the good case *and the bad case* one is guaranteed to be citing information that doesn't beg the relevant question against the sceptic. Of course the standard candidate for rational support that satisfies this anti-sceptical stricture is the fact that one merely seems to see that p . If one enjoys rationally supported perceptual knowledge partly in virtue of one's seeming to see that p then ultimately one enjoys such knowledge on the basis of a consideration that looks like something one could cite in defense of one's perceptual belief—that is, without begging any questions against the radical sceptic. The result is that we have the beginnings of something that may be a vindicating conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge.

What all that means is that if it is *not* the case that one enjoys equal rational support for perceptual judgments in pairs of good in bad cases—if in particular one's rational support in the good case is not made available in both the good and bad (radically deceived) cases—then it becomes impossible to articulate what could be a vindicating conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge. I venture that it is because of the deep-seated influence of this popular approach to dealing with scepticism that the classical internalist is led to think that the intuitive judgments we feel compelled to make when reflecting on the justification available in pairs of good and bad cases must be judgments about *rational support*—and not

merely about epistemic responsibility, and not merely about reasonability, as those have been glossed above. Now if this influence or motivation can seem natural or tempting, I think it is ultimately misguided. It is time to put the 'error' in our error theory.

I think that neither the classical internalist nor anyone should be taken in by the idea that we should want to provide a vindicatory conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge. Not merely because the history of thinking about this issue suggests that it's very difficult to obtain. But more importantly because, I want to suggest, the very idea of a vindicatory conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge borders on being incoherent. And we should not want or strive or aim for things that don't make sense. Let me explain.

The vindicatory conception imagines that out of the information available in bad cases we are somehow able to fashion reasons that in good cases are supposed to help vindicate our perceptual judgments to the effect that a given empirical proposition is true. This is in effect the best that a non-sceptic can hope for once it is agreed that the rational support available in the good case is some function only of the rational support available in the bad case. The hope is that the rational support that is common between good and bad cases can be shown in some way or other to add up to what in the good case is supposed to help vindicate a perceptual judgment to the effect that something or other is true. The trouble is that I cannot in principle see how rational support so conceived could ever add up to what it is supposed to be adding up to here: viz., reasons that in the good case are suitable for vindicating our perceptual judgmental commitments.

For consider what the present conception says are in the good case our supposedly 'vindicating' reasons: They will have to be a function of the best non-deductive argument one can muster from premises about how things merely *appear* to one to be to how things are in the external world. But then notice that, given our starting points, even the most ingenious, most

inventive such argument will be such that it is suitable for vindicating perceptual judgments in the good case only if it is likewise suitable for vindicating perceptual judgments in the bad case. Or in other words: in the best case scenario what we will have secured is a rational vindication of our perceptual judgments that ‘vindicates’ the perceptual judgments of radically deceived and epistemically doomed subjects just as well. But is that *really* a conception worth aiming at? I suggest not. I suggest that any ‘vindication’ of one’s perceptual judgments that is designed so that it can be offered in a context in which none of one’s perceptual judgments is even remotely sensitive to the truth is no vindication of them at all. For this reason I think that nothing that begins where the supposed ‘vindicatory’ conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge would have us begin can end up looking like what it is supposed to be—viz., a conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge where that rational support can be relied upon for vindicating one’s perceptual judgments in radical sceptical contexts. In this way I suggest that the familiar anti-sceptical desideratum that can seem to motivate acceptance of the NEG thesis borders on incoherence.

That concludes what I have to say in response to the diagnostic new evil genius challenge. I think that the epistemological disjunctivist can diagnose the classical internalist’s disagreement with them over the parity intuition in terms of their working under the influence of a tempting although misguided picture of what rationally supported perceptual knowledge is supposed to be. It’s wrong to aim for a vindicatory conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge, and wrong to be influenced by this ideal in one’s thinking about the parity intuition.

Conclusion

Epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge, like any view that denies the NEG thesis, confronts the new evil genius

challenge. This is actually a two-part challenge: consisting in what we called the first-order challenge and the diagnostic challenge for epistemological disjunctivism. The first-order challenge invites the epistemological disjunctivist to explain what we called the parity intuition: if perceptual judgments in pairs of good and bad cases are not equally justified or rationally supported then what other positive epistemic status do these judgments share? I argued that in registering the parity intuition we are being sensitive not to parity in rational support but rather epistemic responsibility and/or reasonability between the good and bad cases. In that way the epistemological disjunctivist can do better than appeal merely to epistemic blamelessness. The diagnostic challenge invites the epistemological disjunctivist to explain why their detractors—in this case classical internalists—are in disagreement with them over the upshot of the parity intuition: what motivates the classical internalist to read into the parity intuition parity of rational support, and how is it that they are misguided in this? I somewhat tentatively suggested that they may be under the influence of a familiar and important strand of anti-sceptical thinking in epistemology that trains one to search for a certain vindicating conception of rationally supported perceptual knowledge. I offered some reasons for thinking that this is a hunt without a quarry, and that therefore it is a motivation that we are well advised to resist.

In the next and final chapter I say something to defend our view against the problems and challenges raised in chapter one associated with making sense of the *reflective accessibility* requirement often readily associated with epistemological disjunctivism. In order to arrive at where I want I will have to consider in detail epistemological disjunctivism in its capacity to help resolve the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ This chapter is adapted from my ‘A Better Disjunctivist Response to the ‘New Evil Genius Challenge’” published in *Grazer Philosophische Studien* (2017).

² Cf. Goldman (1979).

³ I should add that the new evil genius challenge is a challenge not only for epistemological disjunctivists (and reliabilists), but also for any *evidential externalist* (anyone who denies the new evil genius thesis). For example arguably any proponent of E=K faces this problem, such as Williamson (2000). Littlejohn (2015) (2017) (*forthcoming b*) seems to face it as well, as does someone like Schellenberg (2015); and perhaps even evidentialist reliabilists like Goldman (2011), Comesaña (2010), and Alston (1988).

⁴ See chapter one.

⁵ Thanks especially to an anonymous referee for the journal *Grazer Philosophische Studien* for helping me to make this clear.

⁶ Compare also John McDowell (2002a, p. 99). Of someone who is tricked with mirrors into thinking that there’s a candle in front of her, he writes that “it might be rational (doxastically *blameless*) for that subject—who only seems to see a candle in front of her—to claim that there is a candle in front of her [emphasis added].” Williamson (2014, p. 5) puts it in terms of *excuse*: “Although your belief that you have hands is fully justified, the corresponding brain in a vat’s belief is not. But the brain in a vat *has a good excuse* for believing that it has hands, because, for all it knows, its belief that it has hands is justified, since, for all it knows, it knows that it has hands. Confusion between justification and excuses undermines much talk of epistemic justification [emphasis added].”

⁷ Objection: perhaps the very notion of epistemic justification carries with it a commitment to some notion of epistemic obligations. But then is it really a *liability* of an explanation of the parity intuition that it commits those of us who have this intuition to the existence of epistemic obligations? After all how many among us are ready to deny that there is such a thing as epistemic justification? But then it seems that most of us are (implicitly) committed to there being epistemic obligations anyway. Actually it isn’t so clear that the very notion of epistemic justification entails commitment to epistemic obligations. For example Ernest Sosa (2016, p. 193) distinguishes a “strict deontic framework” from a more “loose deontic *functional* framework”, where it’s only within the former framework that notions of epistemic obligation are at home.

⁸ Note that this is not Zagzebski’s label for her view. Rather Guy Axtell (2000, xiv-xix) first draws the distinction between virtue-responsibilism and virtue reliabilism. For another virtue-responsibilist approach see Montmarquet (1993).

⁹ Battaly (2008, p. 645) for example notes that “responsibilists differ over whether virtues require reliability.”

¹⁰ One can believe something for a bad reason because the relevant consideration is false. Or one can believe something for a bad reason because while the relevant consideration is true, it doesn’t in fact indicate what the subject takes it to indicate (cf. Millar 2014).

¹¹ Compare Millar (2011, p. 345): “So my belief in the bad case is reasonable, in that, roughly speaking, it is a belief that a suitably equipped and competent person might well form in the envisaged situation without doxastic irresponsibility. This, or some refined version, is the truth behind the intuition [what we are calling the parity intuition].”

¹² Now this isn't to deny that the subject in the good case and the subject in the bad case remain equally epistemically blameless. I should say that if it is right to think of these subjects as epistemically blameless then I think the reason why the subject in the bad case is epistemically blameless is because they manifest epistemic virtue and reasonability in just the way highlighted here. Or in other words it's in virtue of enjoying these positive epistemic statuses that bad case subjects deserve to be *excused* (cf. Littlejohn *forthcoming a*).

¹³ Thanks to Brent Madison for inspiring me to address these two objections.

¹⁴ I borrow this language from Greco (2010, p. 5) who compares 'vindicatory' versus mere 'explanatory' anti-sceptical projects in epistemology.

CHAPTER FIVE

Revisiting Underdetermination-based Radical Scepticism: Challenging Reflective Accessibility

Introduction

In the last chapter we turned to playing defense, defending epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge against the new evil genius challenge for epistemological disjunctivism. Now in this final chapter I would like to say something toward a defense of our view against the new reflective access challenges briefly surveyed in chapter one. Recall that these challenges turn on the idea that in good cases one is supposed to have *reflective access* to one's factive rational support—which here so far we have glossed in terms of one's seeing that p to be the case. But notice that this means that if we can raise doubts about the serviceability of the reflective access requirement itself, then that may put us in position to dispense with those reflective access challenges by rejecting the reflective accessibility requirement altogether. This is something I am going to try to motivate in this final chapter, if perhaps in something of a roundabout way.

What I'll do is embark upon a discussion of Pritchard's reflective epistemological disjunctivism in connection with the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem—as he presents it—with a view toward putting into question the significance of the reflective accessibility component of his view. Pritchard (2016a) conceives of this sceptical problem as issuing a kind of challenge: the challenge is to explain how the rational support for ordinary perceptual beliefs *favors* those beliefs over competing radical sceptical hypotheses, where 'rational support' here is of a suitably 'internalist'

specification. What that means for Pritchard, we will see, is that it is rational support that one could legitimately *cite* or appeal to in defense of one's perceptual beliefs particularly in radical sceptical contexts. Interestingly Pritchard wants to suggest that his reflective epistemological disjunctivism is indispensable for overcoming this challenge. That is what I will be taking exception with.

I will draw on a version of the scheme introduced in chapter one for differentiating between different kinds of epistemological disjunctivism in order to argue that you needn't anything near as strong as Pritchard's robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism in order to secure the kind of answer to the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem that Pritchard thinks the internalist wants. In fact I'll show that even a *minimal* epistemological disjunctivism—one that rejects Pritchard's reflective accessibility component, among other things—can perform the required work.

An important result is that it isn't entirely clear what the incentive is for maintaining Pritchard's 'reflective accessibility' component when presenting epistemological disjunctivism. For if I am right that this component is *optional* for securing the kind of answer to the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem that Pritchard's internalist wants, why not simply drop it? But if we are free to drop it then there are no longer any reflective access problems and/or challenges of the sort reviewed in chapter one. Then those problems and challenges, in their current form, entirely lose their footing. A nice result indeed.

Here is the plan. In the first section I review the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem, and Pritchard's reasons for thinking that his reflective epistemological disjunctivism is "vital" (in his words) for overcoming it. Then in the second section I repurpose some earlier material in order to clearly distinguish Pritchard's rather *robust* reflective epistemological disjunctivism from a mere *minimal* epistemological disjunctivism. Then in the

third section I argue that even a minimal epistemological disjunctivism—a view that abjures among other things the reflective accessibility component—can secure the kind of answer to the radical sceptical challenge that Pritchard thinks the ‘internalist’ wants. The upshot here is that Pritchard’s epistemological disjunctivism offers far more punch than we need. I then summarize and conclude, indicating the significance of our discussion for epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge in light of the new reflective access challenges.

§1 Reflective Epistemological Disjunctivism and the Underdetermination-based Radical Sceptical Challenge

Recall that on Pritchard’s ‘reflective epistemological disjunctivism’ one can know that p by virtue of enjoying rational support for believing that p that is both factive and reflectively accessible to the subject—*factive* insofar as it entails that p is the case.¹ In particular recall that on his view when one knows that there is a tomato before one, for example, on the basis of seeing it there that can be because one believes this for the reason that one sees that there is a tomato (in paradigmatic cases anyway).² Now as we just said Pritchard is explicit that he thinks his ‘reflective epistemological disjunctivism’ is “vital” (2016, p. 138) for overcoming the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem. Before seeing why we’ll need a better grip on how Pritchard conceives of the sceptical problem itself.

1.1 The Underdetermination-based Radical Sceptical Challenge

Consider then the following underdetermination-based radical sceptical paradox (adapted from Pritchard 2016a, p. 34):

The Underdetermination-based Radical Sceptical Paradox

- 1) One cannot have rational support that favors one's perceptual belief that p over the hypothesis that one is only a BIV merely hallucinating that p (BIV hypothesis).
- 2) So long as one knows that p is logically incompatible with the BIV hypothesis, then unless one has rational support that favors p over the BIV hypothesis one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge that p .
- 3) But even if one knows that p is logically incompatible with the BIV hypothesis, one *can* have rationally grounded perceptual knowledge that p .

Now this is called a paradox because claims (1), (2), and (3) cannot all be true, and yet each can seem plausible in its own right. We will assume with Pritchard that the best anti-sceptical strategies aim to motivate a rejection of claim (1) rather than claim (2). Then if we like we can conceive of the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem as issuing a kind of challenge: why think that one *can* after all have rational support that favors perceptual beliefs over competing radical sceptical hypotheses—claim (1) notwithstanding? Call this the underdetermination-based radical sceptical challenge.

The *challenge* stems from the fact that claim (1) can seem compulsory given a popular 'Cartesian' dogma that by now the reader is well familiar with. This is the 'new evil genius' (NEG) thesis that says that the kind of rational support available for ordinary perceptual beliefs is never any better than the kind of rational support one might have anyway if one were a radically deceived BIV under the control of an evil neuroscientist.³ Recall that from that it follows that on any given occasion one's best reason for thinking that what one sees is a tomato is something like the fact that it *seems to one* as though it is a tomato—or some other reason one might have anyway even if one were in some radical deception scenario. Pritchard explains that this renders

basic perceptual reasons *insular* insofar as the effect is that even in ideal cases one's having these reasons is consistent with one's being widely mistaken in vast sweeps of one's empirical beliefs (ibid., p. 55). The thought is supposed to be that if *this* is our starting place then it seems difficult to imagine how one's perceptual reasons even begin to give one *more* reason to adopt a given perceptual belief over a competing BIV hypothesis.⁴ In this way claim (1) of the underdetermination-based radical sceptical paradox can seem mandatory; so that the best we can hope for is that claim (2) is somehow mistaken.

Fortunately for us, Pritchard thinks, we can dispense with the NEG thesis since as it turns out it is only a product of misguided philosophical theorizing. It has only *seemed* compulsory since it has been thought impossible to accommodate what our ordinary justificatory practises indicate is the correct conception: viz., that ordinary perceptual beliefs can enjoy as good as *factive* rational support—rational support that clinches the truth of the relevant belief.⁵ Of course Pritchard contends to the contrary that this common sense conception has *not* been shown not to be in perfectly good standing (cf. Pritchard 2012a, parts 1 and 2; 2016a, p. 123-132). It has not been shown that our ordinary perceptual beliefs cannot enjoy factive rational support—i.e. that his reflective epistemological disjunctivism isn't perfectly viable.

This is supposed to be welcome news. Since if reflective epistemological disjunctivism is correct then it no longer seems true that one cannot have rational support that favors one's perceptual beliefs over competing radical sceptical hypotheses. After all if one's basic perceptual reasons are reflectively accessible factive reasons—reasons of the form that one sees that *p*, on Pritchard's view—then they are *not* of a sort one might have anyway even if one had been a BIV from birth and so were never in perceptual contact with the external world. In fact having such reasons entails that one is *not* in that condition. And so it should be readily apparent

how these can provide one with stronger reason for thinking that there is a tomato before one as opposed to thinking that one is only a BIV hallucinating a tomato that isn't there. Claim (1) is thereby shown to be not so plausible after all, effectively neutralizing what can otherwise seem like a real underdetermination-based radical sceptical challenge. Very well.

But you will recall that Pritchard thinks that his reflective epistemological disjunctivism is not only *sufficient* for overcoming the relevant sceptical problem, but is *necessary* as well. To better understand his reasons for thinking this it will be helpful to consider a tempting but ultimately misguided objection to the necessity claim.

1.2 'Rational Support' and Dialectical Propriety

We have just seen that since the NEG thesis is false if Pritchard's reflective epistemological disjunctivism is true, by adopting the latter we can undermine what can seem like good support for claim (1) of the underdetermination-based radical sceptical paradox. But now is the NEG thesis false if *and only if* reflective epistemological disjunctivism is true? Surely one can point to views that entail that the NEG thesis is false short of entailing epistemological disjunctivism. But if so then that opens up the possibility that while reflective epistemological disjunctivism may be sufficient for motivating a rejection of claim (1) of the paradox, Pritchard is wrong to think that it is necessary or "vital" for this purpose. It will be worth our while to pursue this objection further. For while it ultimately fails to appreciate what Pritchard is driving at it will be instructive to see why, for it will help to highlight an aspect of Pritchard's overall approach to the radical sceptical problem that in my experience is often overlooked. This in turn should help us to better understand why Pritchard thinks that his reflective epistemological disjunctivism is necessary for overcoming the radical sceptical problem at issue. The 'objection', we will come to see, misunderstands what Pritchard

thinks is the *relevant sort* of rational support at issue in the radical sceptical problem—which is rational support of a distinctively ‘internalist’ character (in a sense to be clarified further below).

With that in mind consider a view that seems to entail that the NEG thesis is false short of entailing that reflective epistemological disjunctivism is true. For starters consider a view that says that the rational support available for perceptual beliefs is a best only *nonfactive* rational support. Imagine for example that it consists in how things merely *look to one* on a given occasion, so that one’s best reason for thinking that what one sees is a tomato is that it looks to one as though one is seeing a tomato. Now clearly one’s having such rational support is consistent with one’s suffering a one-off hallucination as of a tomato. It is nonfactive rational support, after all. But is it *also* consistent with one’s suffering a hallucination as of a tomato *as a result of one’s being a life-long BIV*? Well not necessarily. It depends. In particular it depends upon how we resolve questions about the *adequacy* of such nonfactive reasons to rationally support perceptual beliefs.

Consider that one’s nonfactive rational support for a given perceptual belief is plausibly a function not only of what we can point to as one’s perceptual *grounds*, but also the *adequacy* of those grounds to support the belief in question (cf. Alston 1988, 2005). But then if part of what makes it the case that one’s nonfactive experiential grounds are adequate to rationally support suitable perceptual beliefs is that these experiences are, say, *reliable indicators* of goings-on in one’s environment, well then we have a view on which one’s having even nonfactive rational support *entails* that one is not hallucinating as a result of one’s being a life-long BIV.⁶ Then we have what looks like *non-insular* rational support, in Pritchard’s terms: that is, rational support the having of which is inconsistent with one’s being mistaken in large sweeps of one’s empirical beliefs. For if in fact one were a BIV then one’s nonfactive experiential grounds would *not* be reliable indicators of items in one’s environment after all, contrary to hypothesis.

It seems clear that a view like this entails that the NEG thesis is false, at least on one perfectly respectable notion of ‘rational support’. For it entails that while one only ever enjoys nonfactive rational support for perceptual beliefs, it can still be rational support that is *better* than what one would have anyway if one were a radically deceived BIV. After all thanks to the reliability condition it’s rational support that entails that one is *not* a BIV, even if it doesn’t yet entail that a relevant perceptual belief is true. With views like this on the table, then, it can seem simply false that the NEG thesis is false only if Pritchard’s reflective epistemological disjunctivism is true; it can seem that even nonfactive rational support can *favor* one’s perceptual beliefs over radical sceptical hypotheses in the way that Pritchard thinks is required. The upshot is that you needn’t subscribe to reflective epistemological disjunctivism—because you needn’t subscribe to factive rational support—in order to motivate a rejection of claim (1) of the radical sceptical paradox. Herein lies our putative objection to Pritchard’s necessity claim.

The problem however is that this objection assumes a notion of ‘rational support’ that is much weaker than Pritchard’s notion. Pritchard will be quick to contend that if we can escape the radical sceptical problem in *this* way then it is only by diluting what is in fact the operative notion of rational support, in effect ignoring the full force behind the radical sceptical challenge.

Pritchard will want to highlight that the challenge does not merely demand that we explain how perceptual beliefs enjoy favoring rational support *where we are free to interpret ‘rational support’ however we want*. Rather the challenge is to explain how perceptual beliefs can enjoy favoring rational support where that rational support is of a suitably ‘internalist’ specification. For Pritchard this means that it is rational support that one could—without dialectical impropriety—*cite* or appeal to in defense of one’s perceptual beliefs in confrontation with the radical sceptic, and in particular after the sceptic has raised her favourite radical sceptical hypothesis as a putative alternative explanation of one’s perceptual evidence. Put another

way: if there is some sense of ‘rational support’ according to which even nonfactive rational support can favor perceptual beliefs over competing radical sceptical scenarios, then it is not the sort of rational support that Pritchard has in mind.

To bring this into sharper relief ask yourself whether it would strike you as appropriate for one to cite what may be favoring but *nonfactive* rational grounds in defense of one’s perceptual belief in a context where a radical sceptical hypothesis has been raised. Imagine for instance that a radical sceptic has now joined you at the table upon which sits a bright red tomato. Imagine that the sceptic asks you whether you think that there is a tomato on the table, and in response to your claim that there is she raises the BIV hypothesis as a possible alternative explanation of your evidence.⁷ Now even if as a matter of fact its looking to you as though you see a tomato provides you with favoring ‘rational support’ in one sense of the term, Pritchard will maintain that this isn’t rational support in the operative sense. That is because it would be dialectically inappropriate to cite its merely seeming to you as though you see a tomato to the sceptic, here and now, in defence of your perceptual belief. Why? Pritchard’s thought is that in citing only these nonfactive grounds one has not even begun to address the radical sceptical error possibility whose effect is now to call into question the purported significance of precisely the grounds you have just now offered. In Pritchard’s own words, these grounds are “declared moot in the context of a sceptical hypothesis being raised (...)” (ibid., p. 138).

You can anticipate where this is going. Pritchard will claim that in this respect *factive* favoring grounds stand out in stark contrast. For unlike citing putative nonfactive rational grounds, when one cites factive grounds in defense of one’s perceptual belief at least one does *not* appeal to information whose significance has been made contentious in the same way as before. On the contrary in citing such factive grounds one seems to be speaking directly to the error possibility at issue: You could not be seeing that there is

a tomato before you if you are only hallucinating one as a BIV. Again, in Pritchard's own words:

“ [...] factive favoring grounds will be incompatible with the sceptical hypothesis in question, and thus this particular evidence is not simply declared moot in the context of a sceptical hypothesis being raised [...] Factive favoring reasons of the kind appealed to by epistemological disjunctivism are thus not contentious in the context of radical scepticism in the same way that nonfactive reasons are” (2016, p. 138).

Now Pritchard anticipates that we may still feel as though citing factive reasons like one's seeing that p in radical sceptical contexts must be dialectically inappropriate for some *other* reason—that is, some reason besides being contentious in radical sceptical contexts in the way nonfactive reasons are. Pritchard explains that this is a perfectly natural reaction, if slightly misplaced in this case, since ordinarily it *is* dialectically inappropriate to cite factive reasons in contexts where an error possibility has been raised. That is because ordinarily one raises an error possibility only when one has *good reasons* for doing so (in which case it isn't sufficient to respond by citing only one's factive reasons). Radical sceptical contexts are no ordinary context, however. For it is impossible that one ever has good reasons for raising a *radical sceptical* error possibility (as Pritchard explains they are by their nature always “rationally unmotivated”) (ibid., p. 138-42). Pritchard concludes that it has not been shown that it is dialectically inappropriate to cite the fact that one sees that p in defense of one's perceptual belief, especially in radical sceptical contexts. I will assume that Pritchard is right about this in what follows.

The important take-home lesson is that we misunderstand Pritchard if we imagine him as claiming that reflective epistemological disjunctivism is vital for securing favoring rational support for perceptual beliefs, where ‘rational support’ is open to interpretation. That would lead one to think, mistakenly, that the sort of objection considered here has application. Rather

Pritchard is claiming that reflective epistemological disjunctivism is vital for securing a conception of the grounds of ordinary perceptual beliefs where those grounds not only favor those beliefs in the required way, but are also appropriately citable in dialogue with the radical sceptic. *That* is favoring rational support properly conceived—or of the sort Pritchard thinks that an ‘internalist’ is interested in.

That concludes our discussion of Pritchard’s reflective epistemological disjunctivism in connection with the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem. In what follows we will assume that Pritchard is right about what an appropriate ‘internalist’-friendly response to the radical sceptical challenge consists in (i.e. that it consists in the availability of favoring rational support that is legitimately citable in the relevant way). I’m working up to arguing that even if Pritchard is right that *some kind* of epistemological disjunctivism is required for generating the desired solution to the radical sceptical problem, it isn’t his *reflective* epistemological disjunctivism. But before coming to that we will need to dissect Pritchard’s disjunctivism more carefully. I’ll do this in the next section with a view toward contrasting Pritchard’s rather robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism with a much weaker minimal epistemological disjunctivism.

§2 Some Varieties of Epistemological Disjunctivism

The first part of this section will serve as review. I’ll review some of what we said in chapter one to make it as explicit as I can that Pritchard’s reflective epistemological disjunctivism is committed to at least three theses that are strictly optional for articulating an epistemological disjunctivist view. For reasons the reader might already anticipate, I will call these the *experience thesis*, the *reflective accessibility thesis*, and the *warrant thesis*. By the end of this section we will have a clearer idea not only of Pritchard’s reflective epistemological disjunctivism, but also of a *minimal* epistemological

disjunctivism—a view that while committed to the availability of factive rational support for perceptual beliefs *rejects* each of the three theses that characterize Pritchard's view. This will set us up nicely for the third section wherein I'll argue that you need only subscribe to minimal epistemological disjunctivism in order to secure the kind of answer Pritchard thinks that the 'internalist' wants to the radical sceptical challenge.

2.1 Reflective Epistemological Disjunctivism Among Other Epistemological Disjunctivisms

Begin by recalling that on Pritchard's view perception can provide one with knowledge because it's part of the nature of some perceptual experiences to furnish rational support that is both factive and reflectively accessible to the subject. And the reason it is an *epistemological* disjunctivism is because: since one does *not* enjoy factive rational support in the corresponding bad case where things visually seem just the same, it entails that cases in which it visually appears to one as though *p* are cases *either* in which one enjoys one kind of rational support *or* else rational support of an entirely different kind (cf. Snowdon 2005).⁸ Or in other words if one is in the good case and so knows that, for example, there is a tomato before one on the basis of seeing it there, then one enjoys a kind of factive and reflectively accessible rational support for believing this that one does not enjoy in *every* case where it's held fixed how things visually appear to one to be. In what follows I'll offer by way of reminder how Pritchard's view can be seen to accept several theses that are strictly optional for advancing an epistemological disjunctivist view.

First off recall we said that Pritchard's view assigns *visual experiences* a particular role in providing one with factive, reflectively accessible rational support in the good case: that in fact Pritchard thinks that it is part of the *nature* of one's visual experience that it provide such rational support when it does. Call this the experience thesis.⁹ Now while Pritchard commits to the

experience thesis we saw in chapter one that in fact this is optional for a disjunctivist. For you can easily articulate epistemological disjunctivist views that are *not* committed to the experience thesis.

Earlier we highlighted Ernest Sosa's (2011, pp. 74-78) view as a case in point. On his view an experience can furnish one with factive rational support for a perceptual belief owing to the experience's *causal history*. More specifically: owing to whether the experience in question is an *apt* experience.¹⁰ Since Sosa needn't think that it is *part of the nature* of an experience that it is an apt experience, he needn't think that it is part of what individuates a given experience that it provides one with factive rational support for suitable perceptual beliefs. We also highlighted that one can even imagine a disjunctivist view according to which visual experiences play *no role at all* in furnishing one with factive rational support—much less the sort of role that Sosa has for them. For example you could combine a reliabilist view of perceptual knowledge—according to which visual experiences do nothing to supply one with that knowledge (cf. Lyons 2009)—with the thought behind E=K that one's evidence includes all and only the propositions one knows (cf. Williamson 2000). But then since in the good case one knows for example that there is a tomato before one, one might draw the conclusion that in such case one enjoys a kind of factive evidential or rational support for believing this—rational or evidential support consisting of the fact itself.¹¹ Therefore it seems clear that an epistemological disjunctivism need not commit to the experience thesis.

Secondly, recall we said that Pritchard advances his reflective epistemological disjunctivism in service of an account of basic perceptual *warrant*—that is, an account of whatever it is that turns merely true perceptual belief into perceptual knowledge. He wants to say that perceptual knowledge can be partly *constituted* by factive and reflectively accessible rational support, so that it is *because* one enjoys this rational support that one can know what one does.¹² Call this the warrant thesis. But we

suggested that this second thesis is no more obligatory than the first; that in fact there are epistemological disjunctivist views in the literature that explicitly reject it.

Here we highlighted Alan Millar's (2010) (2014) (2016) view as a case in point. In particular recall from our discussion of Millar's view in chapter three that while he thinks that it typically happens that we enjoy factive rational support for what we know on the basis of perception, it's not as though we know what we do *in virtue* of enjoying such factive rational support. Rather it is in virtue of exercising certain perceptual-recognitional capacities that we know what we know, where these are not themselves capacities to believe things on the basis of reasons. Therefore it seems clear that epistemological disjunctivism need not commit to the warrant thesis, neither.

The third and final thing we noted about Pritchard's reflective epistemological disjunctivism is that, plainly, he thinks that the factive rational support at issue should be *reflectively accessible* to the subject. Call this the reflective accessibility thesis. It is in virtue of accepting this third thesis, of course, that Pritchard's reflective epistemological disjunctivism is susceptible to the reflective access problems and challenges raised in chapter one. Now perhaps it is mandatory that one sign up to this thesis in order to generate the kind of solution to the radical sceptical problem that Pritchard imagines that the internalist wants. I am getting set to argue that that is *not* the case. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. For now recall that at least it doesn't seem mandatory for advancing an epistemological disjunctivism that one commit to this thesis.

In this connection we highlighted Susanna Schellenberg's view (2013 (2016)). Recall she thinks that in good cases one's experiences provide one not only with "phenomenal evidence" but also "factive evidence" for suitable perceptual beliefs. And yet she thinks that, in her own words, "it's always unbeknownst to the subject" whether she enjoys factive evidence in addition

to merely phenomenal evidence, adding that “we need not think that what is accessible from the first person perspective dictates what is rational to heed” (2016, pp. 880-81). But now if that isn’t enough we also pointed to Ian Schnee’s (2016) project where he argues that when one knows that p one’s basic perceptual reason for believing that p can consist entirely in the fact that p itself. And yet surely no one should think that empirical facts themselves are reflectively accessible to subjects. Both authors then commit to views on which when you know that p you enjoy a kind of factive rational support for believing p where this rational support is *not* reflectively accessible to the subject. It therefore seems clear, lastly, that an epistemological disjunctivism needn’t commit to the reflective accessibility thesis.

We noted also in chapter one that this helps us to imagine a range of possible epistemological disjunctivist views. For our purposes let’s locate on one end of a spectrum of such views Pritchard’s robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism—a view that accepts each of the experience, warrant, and reflective accessibility theses—and at the opposite end a *minimal* epistemological disjunctivism: a view that eschews *all* of those theses while subscribing to the availability of factive rational support for perceptual beliefs. Before proceeding to the next section it will be helpful to have a clearer idea of what a minimal epistemological disjunctivism might look like. So let’s imagine an example.

2.2 Minimal Epistemological Disjunctivism

Begin then by recalling Schnee’s view about basic factive perceptual reasons. On that view when one is in the good case and so perceptually knows that p one enjoys a kind of factive rational support for believing this that one does not enjoy in the corresponding bad case—rational support comprised solely of the fact that p itself. Now I think that there is a

straightforward way of filling in some of the details so as to satisfy a minimal epistemological disjunctivism: one that commits to the existence of basic factive rational support *without* the trappings of the experience, reflective accessibility, and warrant theses.

We noted already that this sort of view is committed to rejecting the reflective accessibility thesis. Clearly if one's basic rational support for thinking that there is a tomato before one can consist in the fact that there is a tomato before one, then this is *not* rational support to which one has reflective access. Whatever 'reflective access' amounts to in this connection surely one cannot know just by reflection alone that there is a tomato before one when there is. Very well. But then what about the experience and warrant theses?

Well notice that, whatever Schnee himself thinks, one is not forced to think that it is owing to the nature of one's perceptual experience as of *p* that one enjoys factive rational support in the good case furnished by the fact that *p* itself. Perhaps for example one comes to have this rational support on account of truly believing that *p* as a result of a reliable belief-forming process where conscious experiences here function as mere epiphenomena. That would be to develop Schnee's view in a direction that rejects the experience thesis. But more than that this also naturally lends itself to a rejection of the warrant thesis as well. After all perhaps it is natural to assume that if one has one's factive reason that *p* by virtue of truly believing that *p* on account of a reliable belief-forming process then one has one's factive reason by virtue of *knowing* the matter at issue.¹³ But then—contrary to what the warrant thesis might otherwise suggest—one hardly knows the matter at issue *by virtue* of enjoying such factive rational support (which of course need not imply that one does not or cannot *justifiably believe* what one does on account of this fact).¹⁴ I do not claim that this is Schnee's view, nor anyone's view for that matter. I do claim that it is a natural and not entirely implausible way of pursuing the details. It is a view available for the taking.

To my mind this represents a nice example of what a minimal epistemological disjunctivism might look like—a view that rejects each of the experience, warrant, and reflective accessibility theses while holding out for the availability of factive rational support for perceptual beliefs. I will now go on to argue that even a minimal epistemological disjunctivism like this is sufficient for overcoming the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem; that it supports a conception of favoring rational support of a suitably ‘internalist’ variety that Pritchard thinks is relevant. If I succeed then I will have shown that Pritchard’s robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism—notably featuring a reflective accessibility component—while certainly sufficient, is not necessary or “vital” for providing Pritchard’s internalist’s solution to the relevant sceptical challenge.

§3 Minimal Epistemological Disjunctivism and The Underdetermination-based Radical Sceptical Challenge

So here is where we are. According to Pritchard the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem challenges us to provide some account of how perceptual beliefs enjoy rational support *of a suitably ‘internalist’ specification* that favors those beliefs over competing radical sceptical hypotheses—that is, rational support that is citable without dialectical impropriety in defense of one’s beliefs in conversation with the radical sceptic. Pritchard argues that it is a point in favor of his robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism that it can provide such an account—even suggesting that his view is “vital” on this score. But in this section I will argue that it is hardly clear that that is the case. For in fact even a minimal epistemological disjunctivism—one that eschews each of the experience, warrant, and reflective accessibility theses that characterize Pritchard’s view—can sustain the kind of ‘internalist’-friendly answer to the sceptical problem that Pritchard thinks we need.

It should be relatively clear how our minimal epistemological disjunctivism could support the idea that the rational support for perceptual beliefs favors those beliefs over radical sceptical hypotheses—provided that we can show that this rational support also satisfies the relevant ‘internalist’ citability requirement. For if one’s basic perceptual reason for thinking that there is a tomato before one can be *the fact* that there is a tomato before one, then clearly one has rational support that favors this belief over the radical sceptical hypothesis that one is a life-long BIV only hallucinating a tomato that isn’t there. Why? Well for the same reason that Pritchard thinks that one’s *seeing that* there is a tomato does the trick—viz., that it entails that what one believes is true at the same time that it entails that the competing radical sceptical hypothesis is false. It cannot be that one is only hallucinating a tomato that isn’t there if it is a fact that the thing before one is a tomato. That much seems straightforward.

But now recall that in order to sustain the sort of solution to the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem that Pritchard thinks the ‘internalist’ is after it isn’t enough that perceptual beliefs merely enjoy favoring rational support on just any conception of ‘rational support’ that we might help ourselves to. Of course it must be rational support of the sort Pritchard thinks that the ‘internalist’ has in mind. Here that means: rational support that it would be dialectically appropriate for one to *cite* or appeal to in defense of one’s beliefs in radical sceptical contexts. But at this point you might wonder: can one really properly cite *p itself* in defense of one’s perceptual belief that *p* in an exchange with the radical sceptic? Below I will contend that one can. If I can make my case then I will have shown that even a minimal epistemological disjunctivism is sufficiently ‘internalist’ to provide the kind of solution to the radical sceptical problem that Pritchard is interested in. An interesting upshot here is that since our minimal epistemological disjunctivism abjures the reflective accessibility thesis (among other theses) the effect is that we put into question what might otherwise be

thought of as an important motivation for maintaining a reflective accessibility component in presentations of epistemological disjunctivism.

Very well then. I propose that it *can* be perfectly appropriate in radical sceptical contexts for one to cite *p* in defense of one's perceptual belief that *p*. One might immediately balk at this idea: *maybe* it can be appropriate to cite *p* in defense of one's belief that *p* when *p* is a proposition about one's conscious mental states. But when *p* is an empirical proposition about the external world? Surely not. Well hold on a moment.

To warm you up to the proposal imagine yourself again with the sceptic seated at a table upon which sits a bright red tomato. Don't forget that you know that the tomato is sitting there in plain view just as much for the sceptic as it is for you. Now consider the following exchange:

Sceptic: True or false? There is a tomato on the table.

You: True, obviously.

Sceptic: Okay. But why think that?

You: (looking again at the tomato) What do you mean? Because *there is* a tomato on the table.

Sceptic: Ah but perhaps things only seem that way because you are a BIV hallucinating a tomato that isn't actually there.

You: What? Why think that I am a BIV?

Sceptic: I don't know. But isn't it possible? But then why think that there is a tomato on the table, after all?

You: (becoming impatient) Because there is a tomato on the table.

Now for my own part I cannot see why it *must* be conversationally inappropriate for you to defend your perceptual belief that *p* at the end—*after* the radical sceptical hypothesis has been introduced—by simply citing again what it is you believe. In fact it seems to me that this represents what may be

a perfectly natural exchange between oneself and a sceptic whom one knows is only out to make trouble.

For starters we know at least this much. We know that citing p in defence of one's belief that p in this context *cannot* be dialectically inappropriate for the reasons Pritchard claims that citing nonfactive reasons is dialectically inappropriate. For unlike citing nonfactive reasons—and like citing the different factive reason that one *sees that p* —by citing p itself one speaks directly against the radical sceptical error possibility in question. That is to say that in citing this factive reason one does not merely cite information whose significance with respect to p has already been called into question by the raising of the radical sceptical error possibility. Rather since it cannot be true both that $\langle p \rangle$ and that $\langle \text{not-}p \rangle$ since one is only hallucinating that p , in citing p itself one cites something that speaks directly against the error possibility at issue.

More than that we also know that citing p itself in this context cannot be conversationally inappropriate for what Pritchard thinks is the *usual* reason. As noted already in the first section, in the usual case one's interlocutor has some *good reason* for raising an error possibility against one's perceptual belief. Perhaps for example one's interlocutor raises the possibility that the thing before one is only a fake tomato, citing that she knows that tomatoes are often switched out for fake look-alikes in this environment. Then it *would be* inappropriate for one to defend one's original claim by citing again what one believes—viz., that there just *is* a tomato there on the table—just as much as it would be inappropriate to cite other factive reasons like that one can *see that* there is a tomato. However, recall that as Pritchard points out it is part of the nature of radical sceptical hypotheses that whenever these are raised they are always “rationally unmotivated.” And so it remains unclear why in such cases one should be prohibited from appealing to what a given theory indicates is one's basic *factive* perceptual reason—be it the fact that one sees that p , or, in our case, the fact that p itself.

It looks like so far so good. But we are not finished without anticipating this further important objection. You might think that at least with respect to alleged empirical knowledge one should somehow communicate *how one knows that p* in citing one's basic factive perceptual reasons in response to a relevant challenge. But then it would seem like it should *never* be dialectically appropriate to cite only *p* itself in defense of one's perceptual belief that *p*, since in that case it is hardly clear from what one says how one knows or has any access at all to the matter in question.

To illustrate the worry consider Pritchard's favourite case (cf. 2012a, p. 17). If your manager is on the phone with you wanting to know whether Spencer is at work then in defense of your claim that he *is* it would hardly be appropriate to cite over the phone "he just *is* at work"—even if this could otherwise be *your* reason for believing this since he is standing right in front of you. Rather Pritchard seems to be correct that the more fitting response in this case is to cite something like the fact that you can *see that* Spencer is at work. But then doesn't this give us good reason to think that it is never permissible to cite something in defense of a perceptual belief without explicitly communicating how you know the matter in question? I don't see why we have to think so. But then that leaves me with further explaining to do: if it is not appropriate to cite *p* itself in defense of your perceptual belief that *p* over the phone with your manager then why should it be permissible to do so at the table with the sceptic—as I want to maintain? Here is how I have come to see things.

It seems to me that conversational exchanges of the sort under consideration are governed by the following general rule. I call it very simply the "how you know" rule.

"HOW YOU KNOW" RULE

If it is not part of the shared background between one and one's interlocutor *how* one knows that *p* if one knows that *p*, then in defense

of a claim that *p* one owes it to one's interlocutor to somehow communicate that information.

Notice immediately that in Pritchard's manager case it is *not* part of the shared background between you and your manager how you know that Spencer is at work if you know this at all. Did a co-worker tell you this? Are you inferring this from other information? Are you recalling an event from earlier in the day? Or perhaps can you simply see that Spencer is at work? Needless to say your manager hasn't a clue. But then assuming that we in fact hold one another to the "how you know" rule, your manager has every right to expect that you provide her with this information in defense of what is in fact an item of *perceptual* knowledge. The effect is that when you *do not*—when you merely cite the fact that "Spencer just *is* at work" in defense of your perceptual belief—then on pains of violating Grice's maxim of quantity¹⁵ you generate an implicature to the effect that you haven't a clue how you know that Spencer is at work. Otherwise why else would you withhold such readily available information?¹⁶ But if you haven't a clue how you know that Spencer is at work then why are you claiming this to begin with? You see how it works.

I submit that this is why in cases like Pritchard's manager case it can seem dialectically inappropriate to cite *p* in defense of one's perceptual belief that *p*. In these cases the relevant background is such that in citing one's reason one owes it to one's interlocutor to communicate how one knows what one presents oneself as knowing. The result is that by merely citing what one believes one effectively says to one's interlocutor that one hasn't a clue how one knows what one presents oneself as knowing.

But now compare the relevant background at issue in your exchange with the radical sceptical over there being a tomato on the table. Crucially, things are very different here from how they are in Pritchard's manager case. In particular here it is *not* as though it isn't common knowledge between you

and the sceptic *how* you know that there is a tomato before you if you know this at all. Plausibly you and the sceptic both know, and both know that the other knows, that if you know that there is a tomato on the table before you then it is by *seeing* it there. The result is that by citing only the fact that *p* in defense of your perceptual belief that *p* you do *not* give yourself to be interpreted as withholding some bit of readily available information that in other contexts you might be expected to provide. *A fortiori* no Gricean maxim of quantity is seemingly violated here. Rather in simply citing what it is you believe it seems you are being as informative as is required since you and the sceptic both know that if you know that there is a tomato before you then it is by way of seeing it there. The result of course is that you *don't* generate any implicature to the effect that you haven't a clue how you know that there is a tomato on the table before you, despite citing only *p* itself in defense of your perceptual belief that *p*.

This gets the two cases just right, it seems to me. With the “how you know” rule in effect we can explain why it can seem perfectly natural for you to cite *p* itself in defense of your perceptual belief that *p* with the radical sceptic at the table, consistently with its being inappropriate to do likewise with your manager over the phone.

I can't immediately think of any other reason for thinking that it must be dialectically inappropriate to cite *p* itself in defense of one's perceptual belief that *p* in radical sceptical contexts, especially if we are already allowing with Pritchard that it could be permissible for one to cite the fact that one sees that *p* in radical sceptical contexts.¹⁷ I have to conclude that far from requiring Pritchard's very robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism, we need only subscribe to a minimal epistemological disjunctivism in order to secure the sort of answer to the underdetermination-based radical sceptical challenge that Pritchard thinks that the 'internalist' is after: viz., rational support that not only favors perceptual beliefs over competing radical

sceptical hypotheses, but it also legitimately *citable* in defense of those beliefs in radical sceptical contexts.

§4 Epistemological Disjunctivism about Judgmental Perceptual Knowledge and The New Reflective Access Challenges(s)

Before concluding I would like to draw the reader's attention what seems like an important upshot of all this for our thinking about the reflective accessibility component usually associated with epistemological disjunctivism. We have just seen reason to think that in order to secure what Pritchard thinks of as the *internalist's* solution to the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem it is not essential that we appeal to factive rational support that is *reflectively accessible* to the subject (among other theses associated with Pritchard's reflective epistemological disjunctivism). Granted it seems that we do need to appeal to factive rational support to which one has *some kind* of access. But not necessarily, it seems, *reflective* access.

This may turn out to be crucial. For if in order to properly treat the radical sceptical problem is isn't required that rational support be reflectively accessible as opposed to accessible in some other way—i.e. perhaps in a way that constitutively depends upon one's acquiring the perceptual knowledge at issue (cf. Kraft 2015)—then it isn't entirely clear what the motivation is for insisting that perceptual knowledge should be grounded in rational support that is both factive *and* reflectively accessible. And that irrespective of whether we think one's basic factive perceptual reasons are the fact that one sees that *p*, as we suggest in this thesis, or merely the fact that *p* itself as suggested above. In other words we now have grounds for questioning what work the reflective accessibility component is performing

that could not be performed equally well by some theory of non-reflective access to factive rational support for perceptual beliefs. Absent further motivation on this score it seems that the epistemological disjunctivist is best advised to simply give up the reflective accessibility component stock and barrel.

In fact giving up on the reflective accessibility component suits epistemological disjunctivism remarkably well, I think. For just now there exist a small battery of putative problems and challenges for epistemological disjunctivism that turn on just this issue (see again chapter one). I don't mean to suggest that these problems are insurmountable for a reflective epistemological disjunctivism. But better yet to pull the proverbial rug from under these problems and challenges by simply dislodging the thought that they depend upon: viz., that there can be such thing as rational support that is both factive *and* reflectively accessible. *Especially* if this thought seems to be an idle one anyway—as I have tried to argue here.

For this reason I am not prepared to say with respect to judgmental perceptual knowledge that sustaining a perceptual judgment to the effect that p on the rational basis of merely functionally knowing that p in a visual-perceptual way requires that one have reflective access to the merely function perceptual knowledge at issue. I don't have a theory to present here of the kind of non-reflective access that certainly *is* required. That is an item for further research. But for the reasons presented here I see no reason to feel backed into a corner to admit that the sort of access to one's basic factive perceptual reasons here must be *reflective* access. Certainly I have not shown here that there is *no way* to further motivate the reflective accessibility requirement now commonly associated with epistemological disjunctivism. But for the time being, and for the reasons indicated here, my suspicion is that the new reflective access challenges are in fact innocuous.

Conclusion

In this chapter I aimed to say something in defense of epistemological disjunctivism—and in particular epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge—against the problems and challenges we raised for the view back in chapter one that turn on its alleged reflective accessibility requirement. At the end we arrived where I wanted through what at first may have seemed like a deviant route.

Our discussion centred on the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem. According to Pritchard the problem trades on the thought that the rational support for ordinary perceptual beliefs should not only favor those beliefs over competing radical sceptical hypotheses, but also be citable in contexts where radical sceptical hypotheses have been raised. That is how the ‘internalist’ approaches the sceptical problem. Pritchard suggests in recent work that in order to overcome this problem we *must* subscribe to his robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism—which plainly incorporates a ‘reflective accessibility’ thesis, among others. I tried to show that that is mistaken. By carefully distinguishing Pritchard’s robust reflective epistemological disjunctivism from only a minimal epistemological disjunctivism I tried to show that certain crucial elements of Pritchard’s view are in a way dispensable. In particular you needn’t subscribe to either the experience thesis, warrant thesis, or importantly the reflective accessibility thesis in order to provide the kind of ‘internalist’ solution to radical scepticism that Pritchard thinks we should be aiming for. At the end of the day the experience, warrant, and reflective accessibility theses look to be wheels turning idly in the debate with the underdetermination-based radical sceptic.

That has potential to be an important outcome not least when we turn back to consider the challenges epistemological disjunctivism can seem to face in light of its subscribing to rational support that is both *factive and reflectively accessible*. For if this is sufficient to undercut the motivation for maintaining a reflective accessibility component, proponents of

epistemological disjunctivism should feel free to drop it from their view. The best part is that then the problems and challenges that hinge on that component become dislodged. For these reasons I make no claim to incorporate a reflective accessibility component in my epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge. With respect to those access problems raised in chapter one for epistemological disjunctivism I claim immunity for my view.

Notes to Chapter Five

¹ Recall that here Pritchard takes himself to be receiving inspiration from John McDowell (cf. 1982, 1994, 1995, 2011)

² Unlike McDowell (cf. 1994, 1995) remember that Pritchard reserves the right to allow for perceptual knowledge in cases other than paradigmatic ones—that is, in cases where one *doesn't* enjoy factive and reflectively accessible rational support.

³ Compare Schonbaumsfeld (2016, p. 2) who identifies this with “the Cartesian picture of [perceptual] evidential grounds”. The Cartesian picture supports what she calls *the reasons identify thesis*—the idea that “even the good case cannot provide us with better reasons than the bad case [for accepting perceptual beliefs]” (ibid., p. 14). See Lehrer and Cohen (1983) for initial discussion surrounding the ‘new evil genius’.

⁴ Notice that there’s no *general* claim being made here that if one knows that *p* and *q* are logically inconsistent and yet both are allowed by one’s evidence, one has rational support for believing *p* only if one’s rational support entails not-*q*. For example one may roll the dice and before looking at the result have more reason to think that it has landed something 1-5 rather than 6, despite the fact that before looking one’s evidence allows for both outcomes. Plausibly that’s because of the availability of *suitable background information*. By contrast, as Pritchard notes, all such information is rendered moot in radical sceptical contexts (ibid., p. 138). This is the force behind my claim that if one is limited only to the kind of information one would have anyway if radically deceived then it seems that one’s basic perceptual reasons *don't even begin* to prefer ordinary perceptual beliefs over suitably specified radical sceptical hypotheses.

⁵ See again chapter 1, §2.2, and chapter 2, §1.

⁶ Silins (2005, p. 400, note 11) calls the view under consideration ‘indicator evidence externalism’. Here it may be better called ‘simple indicator reliabilism’ to make plain the sense in which visual experiences need to be reliable *at the world where one is* in order to rationally support suitable perceptual beliefs. Compare Graham’s (2016, p. 86) ‘simple reliabilism’ about justification: “In all possible worlds *W*, a belief is *prima facie* justified in *W* if and only if (to the extent that) the psychological process that caused or sustained the belief reliably produces true beliefs in *W*.”

⁷ Of course if epistemological disjunctivism is true then in matter of fact the BIV hypothesis is an alternative explanation only of a *subsection* of one’s total perceptual evidence (your phenomenal evidence, we might say). That is because on disjunctivism you also have available *factive* evidence, which is hardly alternatively explained by the BIV hypothesis.

⁸ Commenting on John McDowell’s epistemological disjunctivism, Paul Snowdon (2005, p. 140) writes: “We can, therefore, read McDowell as claiming something along these lines; we can divide cases where it is true that it appears to the subject as if *P* into two sorts; one is where the subject is in a position to know that *P*, in that the fact that *P* is manifest to him, and

others where a subject is in a position to know merely that it appears to be that P. The fundamental division between the cases is to be drawn in epistemological terms.”

⁹ The way I understand it, an epistemological disjunctivist who commits to the experience thesis thereby commits to a kind of metaphysical disjunctivism about perceptual experiences. While Pritchard never explicitly commits to what I’m calling the experience thesis in any of his books, he does commit to it elsewhere. Here is a relevant quote: “In the [2012] book, I [...] left the question of whether the epistemological disjunctivist should in addition endorse metaphysical disjunctivism (which is itself a controversial position) completely open. That said, *I do endorse both views [...]*” (emphasis added) (*forthcoming*).

¹⁰ Sosa writes that an experience is suitably *apt* when “its veridicality manifests the competence of [one’s] visual system, its ability to deliver apt deliverances” (2011, p. 77)

¹¹ Never mind just yet what *sort* of ‘rational support’ this is, if any. In the next section I’ll argue that it can measure up even to Pritchard’s desired specification.

¹² According to Pritchard the ‘core thesis’ of epistemological disjunctivism says that “in paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge an agent, *S*, has perceptual knowledge that *p* *in virtue of being in possession* of rational support, *R*, for her belief that *p* that which is both *factive [...]* and *reflectively accessible* to *S*” (first emphasis mine) (2012, p.13).

¹³ Indeed there are independent reasons for thinking that this is plausible anyway (cf. Littlejohn 2016, 2017, *forthcoming b*).

¹⁴ We haven’t the space to consider objections to the effect that you can’t believe that *p* on the rational basis of *p* if you need to believe that *p* at all times you *have* the relevant reason. Although see Schnee (2016) for a defense.

¹⁵ Roughly, Grice’s maxim of quantity demands that one make one’s contribution to the conversation as informative as is required. See Grice (1989).

¹⁶ Surely not because while you know *that* you know, you don’t know *how* you on the matter in question. Perhaps that’s possible in some cases. But it would require some very special explanation for you to know that you know Spencer is at work without knowing how you know this. The more natural interpretation of what you say is that you don’t know that you know that Spencer is at work.

¹⁷ Ram Neta (2011) has defended the following view of *privileged access*: *S* has privileged access to the fact that *p* “just if and just when: the fact that *p* is itself a justification for *S* to believe that *p*” (*ibid.*, p. 20). If this is right then what I am suggesting might entail that one can have privileged access to the fact that *p* where *p* is an empirical proposition.

Final Conclusion

In this thesis I advanced a novel proposal concerning the grounds of specifically judgmental perceptual knowledge within the context of what I called the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge. The key idea is that one enjoys judgmental perceptual knowledge that p by virtue of sustaining a perceptual judgment that p for the reason that one sees that p —where this is simply knowledge that p on the lower merely functional level. The view—I said—is an epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge. I argued that our proposal enjoys at least two important advantages when compared to Pritchard’s more austere presentation of epistemological disjunctivism.

First in chapter two I argued that an epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is clearly inoculated against what I called “the internalist challenge” for epistemological disjunctivism. It is supposed to be a virtue of epistemological disjunctivist views that they ground basic perceptual knowledge in motivating reasons. It is thereby supposed to secure an important internalist insight that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons for belief. The problem is that it isn’t clear why we should follow internalists to begin with in linking perceptual knowledge with motivating reasons in this way. It might have been thought that this was required for securing a certain kind of robust epistemic responsibility for perceptual knowledge. But recall Clayton Littlejohn’s worry: why think that being epistemically responsible for sustaining perceptual beliefs requires anything more than being merely *sensitive* to reasons for abandoning those beliefs. In particular why think that it requires that there be something that is the subject’s reasons for sustaining the belief in question? That we said was the internalist challenge for epistemological disjunctivism.

Crucially, there is no such challenge for an epistemological disjunctivism targeted at specifically *judgmental* perceptual knowledge. For

judgemental perceptual knowledge—we saw—is by nature linked to motivating reasons. Following Ernest Sosa we highlighted that this is a kind of believing that is most distinctive of human beings: rooted in dispositions—or freely chosen evidential policies—to affirm on a matter in question with the aim of thereby affirming knowledgably. In this way we can explain why the epistemological disjunctivist has every reason to side with the internalist in thinking that perception provides one with knowledge by providing one with reasons for thinking that a given perceptual belief is true. For it makes sense to offer an epistemology of judgmental perceptual knowledge: that is perceptual knowledge that is a kind of intentional action performed in light of reasons for thinking that by affirming on a matter in question one would thereby achieve the relevant end: viz., knowledgable affirmation. And so by the end of chapter two we concluded that the internalist challenge fails to get a grip on epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge.

In chapter three I argued that our positive proposal enjoys an additional advantage in connection with the well-known basis problem for epistemological disjunctivism. Recall that the problem here concerns the possibility of enjoying perceptual knowledge on the *rational basis* of one's seeing that *p* to be the case. For if seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p* on account of simply being the way in which one knows that *p* (*S_wK* thesis, or the 'entailment thesis') then it is hard to see why seeing that *p* does not presuppose knowing that *p* in way that *precludes* knowing that *p* on the rational basis of one's seeing that *p*. We compared Pritchard's solution to this problem with Alan Millar's solution, inspired by his knowledge-first epistemological disjunctivist approach. We saw that while Pritchard's strategy committed him to rejecting the seemingly plausible *S_wK* thesis, Millar's committed him to rejecting the idea of advancing epistemological disjunctivism in service of a reductive account of the epistemic basis for perceptual knowledge. I argued that epistemological disjunctivism about

judgmental perceptual knowledge potentially enjoys a unique advantage over both Pritchard's and Millar's view insofar as it offers a solution to the basis problem without having to make these concessions.

It was important here that we invoke what I called the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge. This creates a context in which there are at least two very different *kinds* of perceptual belief (and perceptual knowledge) in play: belief at the intentional judgmental level, and belief at the merely functional level. But now, crucially, it isn't so clear why it should be problematic if one judgmentally perceptually knows that *p* on the rational basis of one's seeing that *p*—so long as seeing that *p* entails not judgmental perceptual knowledge but merely functional perceptual knowledge. For example we highlighted that there is no clear sense in which perceptual knowledge is rationally supporting itself in any vicious way: for the picture is such that perceptual knowledge at the judgmental level enjoys rational support consisting of perceptual knowledge at the *separate* merely functional level. And so epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge—by invoking the bifurcated conception of perceptual knowledge in this way—represents an epistemological disjunctivist approach that is consistent *both* with the S_wK thesis *and* the thought that perceptual knowledge is reducible to a kind of rationally supported perceptual belief.

In chapters four and five I turned to play defense—defending our positive proposal against what I called the 'new evil genius' challenge and the new reflective access challenges reviewed in chapter one.

In chapter four I defended epistemological disjunctivism against the familiar 'new evil genius' challenge. We said that this challenge really involves two component challenges. The first challenge is to provide some explanation of what we called the 'parity intuition': the intuition that subjects in pairs of good and bad cases enjoy some positive epistemic support for their perceptual beliefs in equal measure. Many internalists think that this is because subjects in the bad case enjoy just as much rational support for their

perceptual beliefs as subjects in the good case. This explanation is unavailable to epistemological disjunctivists—of course—and so they owe some alternative explanation that is consistent with their view. This we called the ‘first-order’ challenge. In response to this challenge we argued that subjects in pairs of good and bad cases can be equally epistemically responsible and/or reasonable for sustaining their perceptual judgments. Crucially—however—that is consistent with differing in rational support in the operative sense.

The second component of the ‘new evil genius’ challenge we called the ‘diagnostic challenge’. This challenge invites the epistemological disjunctivist to provide some error theory: some explanation why or how it is that their detractors are misled to think that since subjects in pairs of good and bad cases share some positive epistemic status they must share in rational support for their perceptual beliefs. Here I conjectured that perhaps this is owing to the influence of wanting to secure a *vindictory conception* of the rational support available for ordinary judgmental perceptual beliefs. On this conception rational support for perceptual beliefs is such that one could *appeal* to this rational support without begging questions against the radical sceptic, thereby vindicating one’s entitlement to one’s perceptual beliefs in this way. We noted that since only rational support that is available in *both* the good case and the bad case enjoys this dialectical quality, a philosopher committed to the vindictory conception has this much antecedent reason to think that the rational support one enjoys in the good case is the same as that enjoyed in the corresponding bad case. However before concluding chapter four I offered reasons for thinking that the vindictory conception is fundamentally misguided.

Finally in chapter five I said something to defend epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge against the new reflective access challenges reviewed in chapter one. However rather than addressing the latter challenges directly, I tried to dislodge the thought that

those challenge turn on—i.e. that factive rational support for perceptual (judgmental) knowledge is not only *factive* but *reflectively accessible* as well. I engaged in an in-depth analysis of epistemological disjunctivism and the underdetermination-based radical sceptical problem in order to create suspicion about whether the epistemological disjunctivist really has any good reason to insist that factive rational support ought to be reflectively (as opposed to empirically) accessible to the subject. In the end then I remain sceptical whether we have any good reason to think that judgmental perceptual knowledge should enjoy rational support that is *both* factive and reflectively accessible, and so I have serious doubts about whether the new reflective access challenges pose any ultimate threat to the view endorsed in this thesis.

For this reason I stop short of calling epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge a version of *reflective* epistemological disjunctivism. I certainly think that some form of access is required to one's factive rational support—but I don't yet see why that access cannot depend essentially on one's coming to acquire the relevant empirical knowledge at issue. Needless to say this is something that deserves further scrutiny than what I have been able to provide here. But in the end, for the reasons outlined, it seems to me that epistemological disjunctivism about judgmental perceptual knowledge is the best motivated and least vulnerable of any version of epistemological disjunctivist currently on offer.

APPENDIX

A Plea for the Theist in the Street: In Defense of Dogmatism in the Epistemology of Religious Experience

Introduction

In this thesis we have been concerned with epistemological disjunctivism about *visual* perceptual knowledge. In this appendix I say something to motivate a *religious epistemological disjunctivism*: an epistemological disjunctivism about religious perceptual knowledge. For our purposes we can state the position up front like this: in paradigmatic cases in which one knows that God is manifesting Himself to one in a given way on the basis of a suitable religious experience, one enjoys rational support for this manifestation belief that is both factive and reflectively accessible to the subject. An important part of what I hope to accomplish in this appendix is to highlight how religious epistemological disjunctivism might serve to unlock a novel position in religious epistemology—specifically with respect to the epistemic support available for ordinary theistic belief. The position entails that even the ‘theist in the street’ is well placed to offer *independent* rational support for believing that God exists. This will all become clearer as our argument unfolds. I begin by situating our discussion in the relevant context, before outlining more clearly the plan for the appendix.

* * *

It is commonly held that the ‘theist in the street’ is unable to offer independent rational support in defense of their theistic belief—and so in a strict sense cannot be in possession of *rationally grounded* knowledge that God exists.¹ After all many think that only dialectically effective arguments—like the traditional theistic arguments—can supply such independent rational support. And the theist in the street is stipulated to be unfamiliar with any such arguments.

Many reformed epistemologists suggest that the situation is tolerable. For even if theistic belief is not ordinarily rationally grounded in the operative sense it may still enjoy epistemic support on the basis of its being produced/sustained by suitable proper functioning cognitive faculties (cf. Plantinga 2000), for example, if not (also) on the basis of good evidence (cf. Dougherty and Tweedt 2015, Tucker 2011). We are encouraged to relax: folk in the street can still know that God exists even if they are unable to offer independent rational support for thinking so. However I think that there are still reasons to doubt that this represents a very satisfying nonsceptical religious epistemology.

First there is the familiar complaint raised against any ‘externalist’ view in epistemology. If it is true that the theist in the street really has nothing to offer by way of independent considerations for believing that God exists it can seem as though she cares less about the *truth* of the matter than the pragmatic benefits that come along with sustaining theistic belief. For this reason even if she knows that God exists she can still seem irresponsible for believing so—at least from an epistemic point of view that values truth above all else. This to me still seems undesirable. Second there is a problem looming here for rationally grounded religious knowledge more generally. For example: rationally grounded knowledge that God loves one, or that Jesus is God incarnate, or that Moses met with God on Mount Sinai. Notice that all these propositions entail that God exists. But then so long as a highly intuitive *closure principle* for rationally grounded knowledge is true it follows that

unless one has rationally grounded knowledge that God exists one cannot have rationally grounded knowledge of these more detailed religious propositions (cf. Pritchard 2012*b*, 2017).² I assume that this is also an undesirable result. Finally we should ask ourselves this. Should we really think the theist in the street has absolutely *nothing* to offer by way of independent rational support for believing that God exists? I mean is it really very plausible—especially from a theistic point of view—that she is utterly rationally defenceless in this regard? Frankly that is not my face value assessment. If true that seems like a philosophical result to me, and not a common sense one.

And so in this appendix I would like to motivate a position in religious epistemology that I suspect many think is simply unavailable: a position according to which even the theist in the street is in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists. I will try to convince the reader of this by defending against attack what I will call the ‘Moorean’ proof for the existence of God: what I will argue is a perfectly *cogent* (if dialectically ineffective) proof for theism beginning from premises that are rationally supported on the basis of *religious experiences*. I think this helps us to see that it is a mistake to think that one cannot be in position to offer independent rational support for theism unless one can offer some effective argument like one of the traditional theistic arguments for thinking that God exists. The important upshot is that both philosophers of God *and perceivers of God* can be seen to enjoy knowledge that God exists that is rationally grounded in the operative sense.

Here is the plan. In the next section I build on ideas from William Alston (1991) in order to introduce the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism—a proof for the existence of God that parallels in structure G.E. Moore’s famous proof for the existence of the external world. In section two I evaluate what I think are three important objections to the idea that our ‘Moorean’ proof for God represents a *cogent* proof—or equivalently—can confer independent rational

support upon theistic belief. We will find that each of these objections is inconclusive at best. Of particular interest here will be our engagement with the final of these three objections: the objection from ‘cognitive locality’. For we will see that we can easily dispense with this objection by appealing to a form of religious epistemological disjunctivism. Finally in the third section I anticipate and respond to what may be some of the reader’s further concerns regarding our positive proposal. Here I relate the ‘Moorean’ proof for God to the more familiar argument from religious experience, consider whether we should think that there are cogent proofs for God rooted in claims from Scripture, and then finally offer some brief remarks in connection with reformed epistemology. I then summarize and conclude.

§1 Introducing the ‘Moorean’ Proof for Theism

2.1 Alston and Religious Perception

Begin by considering Bill. We will say that Bill fits the description of our theist in the street who, recall, while religiously devout is entirely unfamiliar with any of the traditional arguments for God’s existence. Now imagine that Bill has just been denied an absolutely crucial job opportunity despite being given every reason to think that it would be offered to him. It would not be unusual under these circumstances for someone like Bill to enjoy a conscious mental condition that—if asked—he might describe as an experience as of God’s helping him to take courage and to trust Him for his provision into the future.

Famously William Alston (1991) argued that there is no good reason *not* to think that in cases like this Bill might enjoy rational support (or ‘justification’ in Alston’s terms) for believing something like ‘God is encouraging me’ on the basis of this religious experience—or else no good reason that would not likewise count against the thought that *visual* experiences can provide rational support for ordinary visual perceptual

beliefs. Alston thought that religious experiences often serve to mediate religious (or ‘mystical’) *perceptions* of God, and can even serve to rationally support (and even warrant) *beliefs* about God’s manifesting himself to an individual in a given way.

The religious beliefs at issue here Alston calls ‘manifestation’ beliefs (or M-beliefs for short). These Alston writes “are a particular species of perceptual beliefs; they are beliefs, based on mystical perception, to the effect that God has some perceivable property or is engaging in some perceivable activity” (1991, p. 77). Plausibly paradigmatic M-beliefs concern God’s activity vis-à-vis a particular subject at a time: for example beliefs about God’s admonishing one for some wrongdoing; strengthening one through some adversity; or demonstrating His love toward one in some tangible way.

In his book *Perceiving God* Alston argues that these M-beliefs are at the heart of a perfectly viable ‘doxastic practice’ in which religious experiences are properly taken at face value to indicate what they purport to indicate to a given subject. On Alston’s picture these M-beliefs enjoy a distinctively *religious* perceptual rational support (or justification) when sustained in light of suitable religious experiences—even affording one perceptual *knowledge* of M-beliefs when conditions are right (i.e. in conditions where God exists and has orchestrated things such that human beings are in sufficiently reliable contact with Him via ‘mystical’ or religious perceptual experience, etc.). Alston is at great pains to show in his book that these doxastic practises are on all fours with more run-of-the-mill *visual* perceptual doxastic practices.

For our purposes we needn’t become further involved in the finer details of Alston’s proposal. What I have represented here is sufficient for what we need: viz., a perfectly coherent account of how, in worlds where God exists and is concerned to manifest Himself to His creation in perceivable ways, one could come to know that God is doing thus and so on the basis of

a suitable religious experience. Neither is this the place to anticipate objections to Alton's overall project. Here I will be taking for granted Alton's account of religious-based perceptual warrants in order to argue that *if it is true* that one can enjoy rational support for M-beliefs on the basis of suitable religious experiences *then* this puts one in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists.

Before moving ahead it is probably worth noting at this juncture that while our proposal depends quite crucially upon the groundwork that Alton (1991) supplies, here we go well beyond anything that Alton envisions himself arguing for. For as we have just seen Alton is primarily interested to substantiate and defend the claim that a certain class of religious beliefs—*M-beliefs*—are susceptible of a distinctively religious perceptual rational support. By contrast he has comparatively very little to say regarding *theistic belief*—or belief in the *existence* of God. He certainly does not claim—as I maintain here—that there may be a cogent proof for theism from premises that rely on one's having rational support (or justification) for M-beliefs.³ It is one thing if on the basis of suitable religious experiences one can have rational support for thinking that God is *manifesting Himself* to one in a given way. It is another thing entirely if this puts one in position to offer independent rational support for believing that *God exists*. Here—of course—we are primarily interested to motivate the latter claim. Very well.

2.2 The 'Moorean' Proof for the Existence of God

We are now in position to state more clearly the idea at the heart of our positive proposal. I submit that if one knows that—for example—God is encouraging one on the basis of enjoying a religious experience to this effect then we can make sense of one's being in position to offer independent rational support for one's theistic belief. We can make sense of that with reference to what I will call the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God,

which I display here alongside G.E. Moore's original proof for the existence of the external world for comparison.

The 'Moorean' Proof for the Existence of God

- 1) God is encouraging me just now.
- 2) God is encouraging me just now only if God exists.

- 3) Therefore, God exists.

Moore's Proof for the Existence of the External World

- 1) Here are my hands.
- 2) Here are my hands only if an external world exists.

- 3) Therefore, the external world exists.

Now to be clear the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God is not a proof that Moore himself advocated for. I give it this name however because I think that it is analogous in crucial respects to Moore's famous proof for the existence of the external world. Here is what I mean.

Recall that in his paper 'Proof of an Externalist World' (1939) Moore was keen to point out that his original proof satisfied what he said were three important conditions of any "sound proof" (his words). First its conclusion is *different* from the premises insofar as it may have been true even if the premises were false. Second the conclusion clearly deductively follows from the truth of the premises. And third Moore claimed that the premises were all known to be true: the second premise *a priori* and the first by means of visual perceptual experience.

This should strike us as interesting straight off since there is no obvious reason why the theist could not also claim that the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God meets these same three conditions. For its conclusion too is different from the premises in the relevant way, and also follows from them with no less deductive certainty. Moreover why cannot the theist also maintain that each of its premises can be known to be true? Premise (2) of course is obvious *a priori*—just like premise (2) of Moore's original proof. But notice that premise (1) is just one of Alston's M-beliefs,

and so—the theistic can maintain—knowable on the basis of its enjoying religious perceptual rational support.

So then initially it seems as though the ‘Moorean’ proof for the existence of God is on equal footing with Moore’s original proof for the existence of the external world. The reader may have anticipated, however, that so far this is not very much to recommend it. For it is now widely agreed that a ‘proof’ might satisfy each of Moore’s original three conditions without being *cogent*—or without yet conferring upon its conclusion *independent* rational support.⁴

For example this is precisely what Crispin Wright (2002) (2003) (2004) (2007) (2014) has argued is *wrong* with Moore’s original proof for the existence of the external world. Wright has long held that having visual-perceptual rational support for empirical beliefs *presupposes* having rational support for believing that there is an external world. It follows from that however that having rational support for believing that one has hands—for example—cannot constitute having *independent* rational support for believing that there exists an external world. For this reason Wright and fellow travellers are convinced that Moore’s original proof is not *cogent*—despite satisfying each of the three conditions Moore highlights in his 1939 paper.

The important question for us then is this. Do claims (1) and (3) of the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism stand in the same epistemic relation that Wright thinks claims (1) and (3) of Moore’s original proof stand in? Or in other words should we think that having rational support for an M-belief on the basis of a suitable religious experience *presupposes* having rational support for believing that God exists? If so then for similar reasons the ‘Moorean’ proof for God cannot be cogent, and then we are in trouble. For then having rational support for M-beliefs cannot be a way of having *independent* rational support for believing that God exists—contrary to our positive proposal.

I imagine that it is widely assumed that one must already have rational support for believing that God exists in order to have rational support for a

given M-belief.⁵ However if this is commonly assumed it is rarely argued for. I will try my best then to construct such arguments in the following section. In the end I'll argue that none of them are clearly convincing. The result is that there is no clear obstacle to viewing the 'Moorean' proof God as a perfectly cogent proof—capable of conferring via the relevant entailment independent rational support for believing that God exists.

§2 Assessing Objections to Cogency

2.1 The Objection from Defeasibility

Before introducing the thought behind our first objection it may be helpful to consider the following rendition of our 'Moorean' proof for God, which is designed to help make explicit the religious-perceptual rational support that it purports to (independently) confer upon theism:

The 'Moorean' Proof for God (I-II-III)

GOD (I) Religious experience as of God's encouraging me.

GOD (II) God is encouraging me (M-belief).

GOD (III) Therefore, God exists

(Since God is now encouraging me only if God exists)⁶

Notice that coming to have rational support for doubting GOD (III) tends to *defeat* or more specifically undermine the kind of rational support Alston suggests one can have for GOD (II) on the basis of GOD (I).⁷ This clearly seems to be one way in which having rational support for an M-belief *depends* upon the claim that God exists. We can illustrate this phenomenon with the following example.

Return again to consider Bill from section one. While before Bill was prone to undergoing mental events that he would readily describe as religious experiences, imagine now that after long study in the problem of evil Bill has now come to harbor serious doubts regarding God's existence. Imagine now that Bill has an experience that in times past he would have very quickly taken to be a religious experience as of God's admonishing him for some wrongdoing. Plausibly Bill's circumstances are now such that any rational support he might have had for accepting the relevant M-belief on the basis of this experience is now *defeated* or more specifically undermined. After all it now seems as though Bill's putative religious experience gives him just as much reason for thinking that it only *seems* as though God is admonishing him since he is suffering a delusory experience in a naturalistic world.

The relevant objection then is this: since earlier *nonsceptical* Bill's rational support for accepting an M-belief depends upon the claim that God exists in the way that our example brings out, it must be that having that rational support presupposes having rational support for believing that God exists (i.e. it must be that having rational support for GOD (II) on the basis of GOD (I) presupposes having rational support for GOD (III)). If that follows then that is bad news for us since that effectively precludes religious experiences from conferring independent rational support upon theistic belief via the relevant entailment.

Thankfully the *problem* with this objection is that the phenomena don't exactly show what the objection presents them as showing. The relevant *dependency* of the premises upon the conclusion shows only that having rational support for GOD (II) on the basis of GOD (I) presupposes that one *lacks* rational support for doubting GOD (III). But plainly *lacking* rational support for doubting GOD (III) is not the same as *having* rational support in favor of GOD (III). And it is only if the phenomena show the latter that we turn a result that is detrimental to our proposal.⁸ What is needed is some further

argument to the effect that *if* one has rational support for p and p entails q , and having rational support for doubting q tends to undermine one's rational support for p , *then* having rational support for p presupposes having rational support for q .⁹ It is hardly clear what an argument for that might look like.

For now I think we can safely conclude that the relevant objection is benign. Even if having rational support for an M-belief presupposes or ('assumes') in some sense that God exists—it is not at all clear that this entails *having* rational support for thinking that God exists as opposed to merely *lacking* rational support for thinking that He does not.¹⁰ So far there is no clear obstacle to holding that the premises of the 'Moorean' proof for God—once rationally supported in the relevant way—cannot generate independent rational support for believing that God exists.

2.2 The Objection from Circularity

Here I consider what I suspect is the objection that more readily springs to mind. Perhaps so far the reader has been unable to shake this thought: But isn't the 'Moorean' proof for God—like Moore's original proof—clearly question-begging? Is it not viciously circular? But then how can it be conferring independent rational support upon theistic belief—as we suggest—if it is so blatantly circular in this way?

We can frame this complaint in the form of a *challenge*: If the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God really is cogent—really can confer independent rational support upon theistic belief as we suggest—then what explains its appearing like a viciously circular proof? The challenge is to provide some explanation here that is consistent with our positive proposal. I think that this challenge can be met. The trick is not to confuse cogent proofs for *dialectically effective arguments*. I will explain this further below.

I submit that the reason the 'Moorean' proof for theism seems viciously circular is because it is *dialectically circular* or (alternatively)

dialectically question begging. Clearly it would be entirely ineffective if presented as an *argument* for the existence of God: for example if presented in dialogue with the religious sceptic in an attempt to rationally convince her to change her mind. It ought to be fairly clear why that is the case.

For recall that we have just finished saying that having rational support for GOD (II) (above) on the basis of GOD (I) requires as a precondition that *one does not doubt or have strong grounds for doubting* GOD (III). But then since it is stipulated that the religious sceptic is in just such a state, this means that she is in no position to rationally accept GOD (II) on the basis of GOD (I) without first abandoning her sceptical position. It is in this sense that the ‘Moorean’ proof for God offers premises for its conclusion that are dialectically question begging in religious-sceptical contexts. Borrowing a locution from Jim Pryor we can say that a religious sceptic is “rationally obstructed” from accepting the relevant premises until she gives up her religious scepticism. What we should *not* assume—I maintain—is that since the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism is ineffective in this way that therefore it cannot confer for the religious *nonsceptic* independent rational support upon theistic belief.

It is important to note at this juncture that I am not engaging in any special pleading. I am not the first to appeal to some such distinction between cogent proofs and dialectically effective arguments in epistemology. For example Jim Pryor (2000) (2004) argues that this is precisely what is required for properly interpreting Moore’s original proof for the existence of the external world. Pryor argues that while Moore’s proof is dialectically ineffective in the context of radical external-world scepticism that should not lead us to think that there is anything “wrong with the justificatory structure the argument articulates, or with Moore’s own reasoning” (2004, p. 369). In effect Pryor maintains that even though Moore’s original proof is dialectically question begging against the external world sceptic that should not lead us to think that having visual-perceptual rational support for thinking that one has

hands cannot be a way of having independent rational support for believing that there exists a material world.

Moreover Ernest Sosa (2009) appeals to a more quotidian example for recommending a distinction between *persuasive* proofs and *display* proofs.¹¹ Sosa writes that his persuasive proof is “a valid argument that can be used to rationally persuade one to believe its conclusion, if one has put the conclusion in doubt” (ibid., p. 7). By contrast a mere display proof, Sosa writes, “is a valid argument that displays premises on which one can rationally base belief in the conclusion, without vicious circularity” (ibid., p. 7). Adopting for the moment Sosa’s terminology, then, what I am driving at is that the ‘Moorean’ proof for the existence of God represents a perfectly legitimate *display proof* for theism. If that is true then I think that the theist in the street *cannot* be told that she cannot offer independent rational support for believing that God exists—even if she *can* be told that she cannot offer an argument for believing that God exists that might bring the religious sceptic around to her point of view.¹²

Very well then. It seems to me that the relevant challenge with which we started has now been overcome. Even if the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism is *cogent*—or *epistemically noncircular*—that is not to say that it is in *no sense* a viciously circular proof. Plausibly proofs can be evaluated against different criteria. And just because a proof is good for furnishing independent rational support for theistic belief, that needn’t entail that it is good for rationally convincing the religious sceptic over to one’s side.¹³

2.3 The Objection from Cognitive Locality

2.3.1 Motivating the Objection

In her book *Extended Rationality* (2014) Annalisa Coliva presents an objection against the idea that having rational support for ordinary *visual-perceptual* beliefs could constitute having independent rational support for

believing that there exists an external world. There she refers to this as “the problem of surpassing our *cognitive locality*” (ibid., p. 61, my emphasis). A similar kind of objection can be raised against the proposal advanced here. Again we will see that this objection threatens to undue our proposal according to which appealing to the kind of rational support one enjoys for M-beliefs can be a way of appealing to independent rational support for believing that God exists—rational support that does not presuppose having rational support for theism. In what follows I will motivate this objection before supplying a response. The response—we will see—appeals to a form of religious epistemological disjunctivism: a disjunctivism about religious-perceptual based knowledge.

Start out then by considering this. Consider that for any ‘good’ case in which one actually perceives that God is doing thus and so we can define a corresponding ‘bad’ case. The corresponding bad case is introspectively indistinguishable from the good case—except in this case in only *seems* to one as though God is doing thus and so because one is suffering from a delusional religious experience (to keep things simple assume that in the bad case one is in a world where metaphysical naturalism is true). The bad case is *bad*—of course—because one is unwittingly misled by one’s experience to adopt an M-belief that is false. Now notice that since the good case is introspectively indistinguishable from the bad case this means that even when one is in the good case—and so actually successfully perceives that God is doing thus and so—one cannot tell by introspection alone that this is what is going on. That is to say that one cannot tell by introspection along that one’s religious experience is actually the result of a real encounter with God as opposed to being produced in some purely naturalistic fashion.

Now it can be tempting to think that this must mean that one has *the same* rational support in the bad case as one has in the good case for accepting the relevant M-belief. The result however is that since in the bad case the relevant M-belief is *false* this means that even in the good case—

where one *knows* the relevant M-belief—one cannot enjoy better than defeasible or *nonfactive* rational support for accepting it. For example many will think that this rational support is constituted by its ‘mystically’ *seeming to one* that God is doing thus and so: rational support that is decidedly *neutral* between one’s being in the good case and one’s being in the bad case. Very well.

With this much in mind consider the following problem. How is it that one can have rational support for accepting that God is *in fact* doing thus and so by virtue of its *seeming to one* that God is doing thus and so—when so easily from the subject’s point of view one might be suffering a delusional religious experience in the naturalist’s world? To paraphrase and adapt what Coliva (*ibid.*, p. 25) says in a related context: even if it were the case that the theist was lucky enough to have mostly veridical religious experiences, she needs some “subjectively available reason” to think that these experiences are at least more likely caused by real encounters with God than by purely natural causes in the brain/central nervous system. Otherwise—in Coliva’s terms—one seems confined to the “realm of experience” in way that makes it seem entirely arbitrary whether one takes one’s religious experiences to rationally support particular M-beliefs over relevant competing naturalistic sceptical hypotheses.¹⁴

By contrast notice the intuitive difference it makes if we imagine that the theist *already has* rational support for accepting things like ‘God exists’, ‘God acts in ways that can be perceived by human beings’, and etc. In that case it would no longer seem mysterious how one could have rational support for accepting that God is *in fact* doing thus and so by virtue of its *seeming to one* that God is doing thus and so.¹⁵ For if it is *really the case* that one has such collateral rational support for accepting theism (among other things) then it seems clear why it is then nonarbitrary for the theist to take its seeming to her that God is doing thus and so to favor believing that God is *in fact* doing thus and so over believing instead that God does not exist and that

one's religious experiences are the product of purely natural causes in the brain (i.e. the naturalistic sceptical hypothesis).¹⁶

Unfortunately these considerations do nothing to favor our positive proposal. For if having rational support for an M-belief on the basis of a suitable religious experience entails as a *precondition* having rational support for theism, then clearly appealing to the latter rational support cannot be a way of offering *independent* rational support for theistic belief—i.e. rational support that does not presuppose rational support for believing that God exists. Here is the argument against our proposal stated slightly more formally. It consists of two sub-arguments.

The Argument from Cognitive Locality

Sub-argument One

- 1) The good case in which one perceives that God is doing thus and so is introspectively indistinguishable from the corresponding bad case in which it only *seems* to one as though God is doing thus and so because one is suffering a delusional religious experience. [Premise]
- 2) If the two cases are introspectively indistinguishable in this way, then the rational support one enjoys in the good case for a given M-belief is the same as the rational support one enjoys in the corresponding bad case. [Premise]
- 3) Therefore: One enjoys at best nonfactive rational support for M-beliefs on the basis of suitable religious experiences. [Intermediate Conclusion, from (1) and (2) MP]

Sub-argument Two

- 4) One enjoys nonfactive rational support for M-beliefs on the basis of suitable religious experiences only if one has antecedent rational support for believing that God exists. [Premise]
- 5) Therefore: One enjoys rational support for M-beliefs on the basis of suitable religious experiences only if one has antecedent rational support for believing that God exists. [Final Conclusion, from (3) and (4) MP]
- 6) Therefore, having rational support for an M-belief on the basis of a suitable religious experience presupposes having rational support for believing that God exists. [Restatement of Final Conclusion]

It may better yet be an argument along these lines that undergirds the impression among religious epistemologists that one cannot offer independent rational support for theism by appealing to the kind of rational support conferred upon M-beliefs on the basis of religious experiences. As the reader may suspect, however, I think it is open to the theistic epistemologist to reject at least one of the argument's premises. Below I'll present my preferred strategy: one that motivates a rejection of premise (2) by way of appealing to a form of *religious epistemological disjunctivism*.

2.3.2 Religious Epistemological Disjunctivism

If the argument from cognitive locality is vulnerable anywhere then I think it must be at premises (2) and (4). However to keep our discussion at a manageable length I'll target only premise (2). Specifically I'll argue that we can reject premise (2) by way of appealing to a version of religious epistemological disjunctivism. With premise (2) then kicked away this argument no longer clearly poses any threat, and this will be the last putative obstacle to our proposal turned aside.

Notice that premise (2) makes a claim about the rational support a religious experience can confer upon a given M-belief. It states that since the relevant good and bad cases are introspectively indistinguishable, then even when in the good case one successfully perceives that God is doing thus and so one's rational support for believing this is the *same* as one would have anyway if one were in the corresponding bad case and were suffering a religious delusion. In other words the idea is that even in the good case one's rational support for a suitable M-belief is the 'highest common factor' of the rational support made available in *both* the good and the bad cases.¹⁷ But then since in the bad case one doesn't enjoy better than *nonfactive* rational support for an M-belief—i.e. rational support that fails to entail that *p*—one cannot enjoy better than nonfactive rational support in the good case, neither. And then sub-argument two proceeds.

But by now we know that it is by no means clear why it should follow from the fact that the two cases are introspectively indistinguishable that one's rational support in the good case should consist of what is the 'highest common factor' between the good and bad cases. We have already seen in this thesis that epistemological disjunctivism about *visual*-perceptual rational support explicitly denies this, and in fact I see no good reason *not* to take up the disjunctivist stance with respect to the rational support furnished by religious perceptual experiences as well.

For example elsewhere I have motivated a *religious epistemological disjunctivism* according to which the good and the bad cases of religious experience are *not* on a par with respect to the kind of rational support available for suitable M-beliefs (cf. Shaw 2016). More specifically the idea is that when one knows some M-belief on the basis of a suitable religious experience one can enjoy *factive* rational support for believing what one does—'factive' insofar as it entails the truth of the M-belief at issue.¹⁸ Of course one *cannot* enjoy rational support that entails the truth of the relevant M-belief in the corresponding bad case, since in that case it is stipulated that

the relevant belief is *false* since one is simply deluded. Even still the idea is that we should not think that just because the good case is introspectively indistinguishable from the bad case that therefore one cannot have better than nonfactive rational support in the good case.¹⁹ It's the same here as the epistemological disjunctivist thinks it is with cases of *visual* perceptual knowledge. The result is a view according to which a 'religious experience' is *either* an experience that puts one in position to know the relevant M-belief by virtue of supplying one with factive rational support, *or* an experience that merely appears 'from the inside' to be doing that. That is what makes the view a kind of *epistemological* disjunctivism about religious-perceptual based knowledge.

For my own part I think that religious epistemological disjunctivism is a view worth taking quite seriously, not least because it promises to pay dividends in religious epistemology of the sort that I am presently trying to highlight. For if the position is available then we can adopt it for motivating a rejection of premise (2) of the above argument, freeing our positive proposal from what otherwise might look like a fairly serious difficulty. For if religious epistemological disjunctivism is true then it simply doesn't matter that one can enjoy nonfactive rational support for M-beliefs on the basis of religious experiences only if one enjoys antecedent rational support for believing that God exists. That is because the antecedent is false if religious epistemological disjunctivism is true—that is, if one can enjoy as good as *factive* rational support for M-beliefs on the basis of suitable religious experiences. In this way religious epistemological disjunctivism can seem even more attractive than I initially let on in previous work (2016)—since I didn't there recognize that it may be a key to unlocking a view in religious epistemology according to which even the theist in the street can enjoy knowledge that God exists that is rationally grounded in a robust fashion—such that he or she is in position to offer independent rational support in defense of their theistic belief.

§3 Additional Remarks: Concerning The Argument from Religious Experience, ‘Proofs’ from Scripture, and Reformed Epistemology

By now I hope to have said enough to convince the reader that there is no clear reason for thinking that the ‘Moorean’ proof for the existence of God cannot represent a perfectly cogent proof for theism; so that if there really are perceptions of God of the kind that Alston highlights, then this puts even the theist in the street in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists. At the very least I hope to have said enough to put the position on the table for further consideration. I think there is much at stake. For if what I have been arguing for is on the right track then contrary to popular opinion rationally grounded knowledge that God exists is actually *ubiquitous*—not only the property of academically-minded theists.

Before closing I would like to briefly address three further issues that the reader may wish to get clearer about. I’ll say something about why appealing to the premises of the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism in defense of one’s theistic belief is *different* from offering a version of the more familiar ‘argument from religious experience’. I’ll say something about whether I think this opens the door to there being cogent proofs for theism beginning from premises rooted in Scripture. And finally I’ll offer some remarks relating our discussion to reformed epistemology.

3.1 Concerning the ‘Argument from Religious Experience’

Needless to say throughout we have been highly dependent upon the notion of religious experience. Perhaps it is tempting to think that by appealing to the rational support one enjoys for M-beliefs in defense of one's theistic belief one is offering only a variant of the better-known 'argument from religious experience'. But that is wrong. To see why consider this relatively recent representation of the argument from religious experience advanced by Richard Swinburne (2004):

Swinburne's Argument from Religious Experience

- 1) People not uncommonly have experiences that purport to be experiences of God's doing thus and so.
- 2) It is rational to believe what an experience apparently reports unless there is special reason not to (Swinburne's *Principle of Credulity*).
- 3) There is no special reason to be dismissive of religious experiences in this respect.

- 4) Therefore, it is rational to believe that God exists.

Notice that the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God differs from this argument in at least three respects.

First from the premises of the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God it follows that *God exists*, not that *it is rational to believe* that God exists. Clearly these are very different conclusions. The first is a metaphysical claim, while the second an epistemic one. My contention has been that religious experiences put one in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists—*not* for believing that it is rational to believe that God exists.

Second—even if we framed the argument from religious experience so that it delivered the relevant metaphysical claim—notice that the *concept*

'religious experience' figures nowhere in the premises of the 'Moorean' proof for God. That is a relevant difference and a significant one at that. For plausibly the average theist in the street does not have the concept of religious experience as this notion figures in the above argument—i.e. as the mental condition that is *neutral* between religious perceptions and merely delusional religious experiences. But while this may preclude one from being able to appeal to the argument from religious experience in defense of their theistic belief, it isn't clear that it precludes one from being able to appeal to the premises of the 'Moorean' proof for theism for offering independent rational support for accepting theistic belief.

Finally clearly the argument from religious experience is designed to be a dialectically effective argument for its conclusion. The 'Moorean' proof for God is not: it is designed merely to show how appealing to rational support for M-beliefs can be a way of appealing to independent rational support for theism (i.e. latter proof is a mere *display* proof, and not a *persuasive* proof, in Sosa's terms).

3.2 Concerning 'Proofs' from Scripture

In light of the forgoing consider now this putative display proof for the existence of God presented again in terms of Wright's (I-II-III) structure:

Scripture (I-II-III)

SCRIPT (1) The Scriptures report that God met with Moses on Sinai.

SCRIPT (II) So, God met with Moses on Mount Sinai.

SCRIPT (III) Therefore, God exists

(Since God met with Moses only if God exists)

Notice that this proof seems to satisfy all of G.E. Moore's three original criteria for any "sound proof". Its conclusion both deductively follows from the premises and is different from them in the relevant way. Moreover it seems open to the theist to claim that each of the premises can be known. The next question is whether we should also think that it is *cogent*—whether or not having rational support for SCRIPT (II) on the basis of SCRIPT (I) presupposes having rational support for SCRIPT (III). The reader may be concerned that the 'Moorean' proof for God is cogent only if such proofs from Scripture are as well—and yet it is implausible to think that proofs from Scripture can be cogent. This requires more comment than I can offer here—but I will offer two remarks.

First proofs from Scripture may be vulnerable at a point where the 'Moorean' proof for God is not. Recall the objection to our proposal from cognitive locality just discussed. Pressed into service here the objection is that SCRIPT (I) provides nonfactive rational support for SCRIPT (II) only if one has antecedent rational support for theism (i.e. SCRIPT (III)), among other propositions. For otherwise it can seem arbitrary to take oneself to have rational support for SCRIPT (II) on the basis of SCRIPT (I) when so easily—for all else one has rational support to believe—it may be that there is no God and the Scriptures at best present a highly embellished historical account. Above we rendered innocuous the parallel objection in application to religious-perceptual rational support by appealing to an independently motivated epistemological disjunctivism about religious perceptual knowledge. Notice however that it is hardly clear whether we can avail ourselves of the same strategy here. That would require adopting an epistemological disjunctivism about distinctively *religious-testimonial based knowledge*—a view that seems hardly plausible on its face.²⁰ And so there may be scope for thinking that even if the 'Moorean' proof for theism can generate independent rational support for its conclusion, proofs from Scripture cannot.

Secondly even if proofs from Scripture *are* cogent in some sense that needn't entail that there are not yet other important differences between such proofs and proofs that follow the pattern of the 'Moorean' proof for the existence of God. For instance, notice that while the 'Moorean' proof for God purports to confer *perceptual-based* rational support upon theism, the proof from Scripture purports to confer *testimonially-based* rational support instead. Potentially that is an important difference. The difference is between having rational support for theism that is *primarily attributable* to the subject's epistemic agency, and having rational support for theism that is not. For notice that in order to acquire rational support for a given M-belief one need only lean on one's own *epistemic powers*—powers to perceive God's manifesting Himself in certain ways. By contrast notice that in order to acquire the relevant rational support for a claim rooted in Scripture one must crucially be relying on the epistemic powers of another—potentially countless others—whomever ultimately is creditable for obtaining, recording, and preserving the information contained in Scripture. In this way one who has rational support for theism by virtue of having rational support for claims rooted in Scripture can seem *less creditable* than one who has rational support for theism by virtue of having rational support sourced from religious experiences. The latter individual—we can say—is *fully epistemically creditable* for having the relevant rational support for theism.

Perhaps this is sufficient for privileging the 'Moorean' proof for God over proofs from Scripture, even if *both*—at the end of the day—constitute cogent proofs for their conclusions. If it seems natural to complain that proofs from Scripture are *too easy*—not evincing enough of an epistemic accomplishment on the part of the subject—then we may be able to accommodate that short of having to deny that these proofs can be cogent in some sense. While there is plenty more here to think about I really must move on to make my final comment.

3.3 Concerning Reformed Epistemology

Perhaps it is tempting to think that our positive proposal is somehow in tension with what is known as ‘reformed epistemology’.²¹ For doesn’t reformed epistemology set itself against the picture that has now come into view: a picture according to which even the theist in the street is in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists? I maintain that nothing that I have proposed here is in any tension with reformed epistemology.

As I think most understand reformed epistemology it describes an approach to thinking about familiar epistemic statuses—like for example rationality, justification, or warrant—in application to theistic belief. In particular a reformed epistemologist will say that a subject can enjoy some positive epistemic standing with respect to theistic belief *independently* of possessing any good argument for thinking that God exists.

But the first thing to notice is that here I have made no claims at all about rationality, justification, or warrant with respect to theistic belief. I have simply wanted to suggest that the theist in the street is in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists. I have made no claims about whether being in such a position is either necessary and/or sufficient or neither for enjoying any familiar epistemic status with respect to theistic belief. In this way I have refrained from making any claims about what reformed epistemology makes claims about.

The second thing to notice is that—in any case—reformed epistemology is supposed to oppose the importance of having *convincing arguments* when it comes to sustaining theistic belief. *Not* the importance of what we have here carefully distinguished as being in position to offer independent rational support for theistic belief. I am happy to agree with the reformed epistemologist if she thinks that ordinary theistic belief is *not*

typically rationally supported on the basis of an argument that could be used to help bring the religious sceptic around.

Now this is not to suggest that reformed epistemology should have no interest in what is at stake here. For if our proposal is defensible then at the very least it affords ordinary theistic belief a kind of epistemic insurance. Perhaps eventually we will be offered good reasons for thinking that theistic belief cannot enjoy some coveted positive epistemic status without one's being in position to offer independent rational support for believing that God exists. Religious nonsceptics have nothing to fear from this prospect if I have sustained the claim that the 'Moorean' proof for God represents a perfectly cogent proof for theism.

Conclusion

At the beginning I said that I was going to endeavour to unlock a position in religious epistemology that many today assume is simply out of reach. The position is one according to which even the theist in the street can enjoy *rationally grounded* knowledge that God exists—where this requires one to be able to offer independent rational support for their theistic belief. The position has seemed out of reach—I suggest—partly because it has been thought that unless one is in possession of a dialectically effective argument then one cannot be in a position to offer independent rational support for God's existence. Here I have tried to dislodge that idea by conducting a more careful study of the relationship between having rational support for 'manifestation' beliefs and having rational support for theism. The result—I suggested—may be a picture according to which you need only be a *perceiver* of God in order to be in position to offer independent rational support for theism—*philosophers* of God do not have the monopoly here (even if they still have the monopoly on effective arguments).

The discussion has also served to motivate a form of religious epistemological disjunctivism. For we have seen that if such a position is available, then we have an easy way of undercutting the force of the objection from cognitive locality. It isn't immediately clear what other options there are for diffusing that objection. I think this certainly provides us with some incentive for investigating further the prospects of religious epistemological disjunctivism.

At the very least I hope to have piqued the readers interest in the position that I have tried to show is available. As I say I think it is a position that is little occupied in religious epistemology today, if at all. Today those working in this area suggest that even if ordinary theistic belief isn't rationally supported on the basis of an effective argument, it may still be epistemically support by virtue of being produced by suitable proper functioning cognitive faculties, or even on the basis of good evidence. None yet have ventured the thought that even if one cannot offer a good argument for thinking that God exists, one may still be in position to offer independent rational support for believing so. That in any case represents my plea for the theist in the street. Perhaps we should call it 'Mooreanism' or 'Liberalism' in the epistemology of theistic belief. In any case I think that it is a position deserving further attention.

Notes to Appendix

¹ Here I follow Duncan Pritchard (2012 *a*) (2017): one does not have *rationaly grounded* knowledge that God exists unless one is in position to offer *independent* rational support for believing that. We need not deny that there are other *weaker* notions of what 'rationally grounded' knowledge is such that it is uncontroversial that the theist in the street enjoys rationally grounded knowledge of theism.

² Here is Pritchard's closure principle: "If *S* is in possession of rational support *R* for her belief that *p*, and *S* competently deduces from *p* that *q*, thereby coming to believe that *q* on this basis while retaining *R*, then *R* is also rational support for *S*'s belief that *q*." In order to accommodate rationally grounded knowledge of ordinary religious propositions Pritchard recommends that we abandon the thought that there is any such thing as rationally grounded belief that God exists, adopting instead his Wittgensteinian *quasi-fideistic* approach (cf. Pritchard 2012 *a*, 2017).

³ Although some of his remarks suggest that he may have been sympathetic to our proposal. Very early on in his book he writes "Am I suggesting that the belief in the *existence* of God is susceptible of a perceptual justification? Well, yes and no. [...] there is the point nicely made by Alvin Plantinga (1983, p. 81) that even if 'God exists' is not the propositional content of typical theistic perceptual beliefs, those propositional contents self-evidently entail it. 'God is good' or 'God gave me courage to meet that situation' self-evidently entail 'God exists', just as 'That tree is bare' or 'That tree is tall' self-evidently entail 'That tree exists'. Hence if the former beliefs can be perceptually justified, they can serve in turn, by one short and unproblematic step, to justify the belief in God's existence" (1991, p. 3-4). It isn't clear that Alston realized that if he is right about this, then there is available a kind of 'Moorean'-style proof for theism that can confer independent rational support upon theistic belief just as well

as any of the classical theistic arguments. Neither is it clear that Alston realized that there may be good objections to this idea, which we will consider here in great detail.

⁴ Such cases are otherwise known as cases of ‘transmission failure’. For overview and discussion see Moretti and Piazza (2013).

⁵ For example here is Duncan Pritchard: “Notice that it is hard to see what specifically rational support is available to the theist to justify the foundational status of this [her theistic] belief. In particular, the kind of rational support that would leap immediately to mind—e.g., *personal religious experience*, testimony from peers in one’s religious community, the evidence of scripture, and so on—would not be apt to the task since it already *presupposes* that one’s belief in God’s existence is rationally held (2012, p. 145, emphasis added).

⁶ Here I am applying the same (I-II-III) structure that Crispin Wright has made famous in connection with discussion of Moore’s original proof for the existence of the external world (for a recent presentation see Wright 2014).

⁷ That is to say that the proposition that God exists functions here as an *authenticity condition*, in Wright’s terminology. As he explains: “Absent other relevant information, any doubt about the 3-proposition must tend, in a rational subject, to undermine the force of the evidence described in 1 for the 2-proposition” (2014, p. 215).

⁸ Note that this is precisely the observation made by contemporary ‘dogmatists’ like Pryor (2000) (2004) (2014) (see also Davies 2002) in defense of the cogency of Moore’s original proof against similar charges. I am simply applying this insight as the charge arises here in connection with the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism.

⁹ Or in other words what we need is an argument to the effect that if a proof exhibits what Jim Pryor calls type-4 dependence then it must also exhibit what he calls type-5 dependence (2004, p.359).

¹⁰ The reader might have anticipated that there may be a further objection lurking here from the phenomena of *religious disagreement*. The relevant objection states that actually the theist in the street *does* have rational support to doubt that God exists since she is aware of there being substantial disagreement over this question. But since we have just said that having rational support for an M-belief on the basis of a suitable religious experience presupposes that one *lacks* such rational support, the result is that religious experiences cannot give one rational support to accept M-beliefs, much less independent rational support for believing that God exists. In response the first thing to say is that this is less an objection to our positive proposal as it is to Alston’s idea that here we are taking for granted. Recall that I am only out to motivate the conditional that *if Alston is right* that religious experiences furnish rational support for accepting M-beliefs, then there is no good reason to deny that this can constitute independent rational support for believing that God exists. But the current objection targets the antecedent of that conditional, not to the conditional itself. The second thing to say—in defense of Alston—is that *even if* we adopt a conciliatory approach here—so that being aware of the relevant disagreement means that one should lower one’s *level of confidence* in theism, it is by no means clear why this should entail that one now has positive reason to doubt that God exists—in particular enough to *defeat* rational support one might enjoy for an M-belief on the basis of a suitable religious experience.

¹¹ Sosa considers a proof whose two premises are < A > and < B > and whose conclusion is < A & B >. He points out that this proof is clearly dialectically question-begging since it would be impossible to rationally accept either of the premises while remaining sceptical about the conclusion. But that shouldn’t lead us to think that someone who is *not already sceptical* about the relevant conjunction could not acquire independent rational support for believing it by acquiring rational support for believing < A > and rational support for believing < B >. Or in other words that should not lead us to think that this cannot function as a perfectly legitimate display proof.

¹² Now this may incline us to think that the ‘Moorean’ proof for God then in *no sense at all* represents a rationally persuasive proof for God’s existence. But some caution is in order here. If the proof cannot effect a rational transition from religious *doubt* to belief in God, so long as it is cogent it may still effect a rational transition from mere *unbelief* to belief in God. In this context I think ‘religious doubt’ refers to some substantial *disbelief* that God exists. By contrast mere unbelief is no attitude toward theism at all. A mere unbeliever, then, is not so clearly “rationally obstructed” from accepting GOD (II) on the basis of GOD (I) for the same reasons the religious sceptic is. And so perhaps the ‘Moorean’ proof for God can constitute a potentially persuasive proof at least for the theistic nonbeliever. Probably this calls for more discussion than I have time for here.

¹³ Of course this is certainly what distinguishes the ‘Moorean’ proof for theism from the more familiar ‘classical’ arguments for the existence of God. For arguably the religious sceptic *could* rationally accept each of the premises of any well-formed classical proof for God’s existence—like the ontological or cosmological argument—without *first* having to abandon her sceptical position. If there really is a distinction between merely cogent proofs and dialectically effective proofs then this helps us to see that the classical theistic proofs are really serviceable in at least *two ways*. For not only might they constitute independent rational support for theistic belief, but they are *also* effective in dialogue with the religious sceptic to help rationally convince her to change her mind.

¹⁴ Here is Coliva commenting on a version of the same problem elsewhere: “If one’s experiences could be just the same no matter how they are produced, why should they justify beliefs about material objects rather than their sceptical counterparts? It seems entirely arbitrary to take them to favor the former rather than the latter. [...] *We are (...) looking for conditions whose satisfaction would allow us to take a mind-dependent kind of evidence to bear on beliefs whose content is eminently mind-independent*” (2014, p. 61, my emphasis).

¹⁵ We need not bother here about *what it would take* for the theist in the street to enjoy such collateral rational support (although perhaps we may appeal to some notion of ‘rational trust’ (cf. Wright 2004, 2014)). For our purposes we need only note that on the current objection one must first enjoy *some such* collateral rational support before enjoying the relevant kind of rational support for a given M-belief. Of course if the present objection is successful and we *cannot* make our how one can enjoy this collateral rational support, then the idea that M-beliefs enjoy rational support at all becomes jeopardized.

¹⁶ Compare: the reason why—before looking—one’s evidence gives more reason to believe that the dice has landed on something one through five rather than on six is because one has collateral rational support for believing that a fair die, when tossed, will *more likely* land on something one through five rather than on six. Plausibly this is why one has more reason to believe the former rather than the latter, even though one’s rational support is *nonfactive* or consistent with either hypothesis.

¹⁷ The ‘highest common factor’ is one of John McDowell’s favorite locutions used to characterize the sort of idea motivating premise (2), which we are presently seeking to undermine under his inspiration. See McDowell (1982) (1994) (1995) (2011).

¹⁸ Specifically Shaw states that “the big idea is that in paragon cases of religious perceptual knowledge that *p* one knows that *p* by virtue of enjoying rational support furnished by one’s *pneuming that p*, there this mental state is both factive and accessible on reflection” (2016, p. 265, my emphasis). Shaw intends “pneuming that *p*” to stand as a kind of religious-perceptual analogue to “seeing that *p*”—or a case of epistemic seeing.

¹⁹ But how does one *really* have access to factive rational support in the good case unless the good case really *isn’t* introspectively indistinguishable from the bad case—contrary to hypothesis? This Pritchard calls the ‘indistinguishability problem’. For relevant discussion see Pritchard (2012 *b*, pt 2.). The interested reader will discover that the response Pritchard

makes available to that problem can easily be pressed into service in defense of religious epistemological disjunctivism against the parallel objection.

²⁰ Although that is not to say that there isn't precedent for an epistemological disjunctivism about testimonially-based knowledge. See McDowell (1994).

²¹ For an accessible introduction to reformed epistemology see the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on the topic by Bolos and Scott. For a recent discussion of reformed epistemology in relation to other approach in religious epistemology, see Dougherty and Tweedt (2015). For an overview of recent work in this area see Moon (2016).

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