Epistemic Elitism and Other Minds[1]

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Abstract: Experiences justify beliefs about our environment. Sometimes the justification is immediate: seeing a red light immediately justifies believing there is a red light. Other times the justification is mediate: seeing a red light justifies believing one should brake in a way that is mediated by background knowledge of traffic signals. How does this distinction map onto the distinction between what is and what isn't part of the content of experience? Epistemic egalitarians think that experiences immediately justify whatever is part of their content. Epistemic elitists deny this and think that there is some further constraint the contents of experience must satisfy to be immediately justified. Here I defend epistemic elitism, propose a phenomenological account of what the further constraint is, and explore the resulting view's consequences for our knowledge of other minds, and in particular for perceptual theories of this knowledge.

The traditional problem of other minds can take the form of a skeptical argument to the effect that we do not have justification for beliefs about others' mental states. There are different ways of formulating such an argument. For my purposes the following should suffice:

(1) Our sensory perceptual experiences of other people represent how they behave in their circumstances, not their mental states.

(2) If we have justification for beliefs about others' mental states, then it is by inferences from beliefs about how they behave in their circumstances.

(3) These inferences cannot be deductive because premises about how others behave in their circumstances do not entail conclusions about their mental states.

[1] For helpful feedback on earlier versions of this paper I thank an anonymous referee for this journal, audiences at the University of Maryland, College Park and Southern Methodist University, and participants in a seminar on consciousness and knowledge co-taught with Berit Brogaard at the University of Miami in the Spring semester of 2016.

(4) These inferences cannot be non-deductive because that would presuppose independently justified beliefs about correlations between how others behave in their circumstances and their mental states.

(5) So we do not have justification for beliefs about others' mental states.

Premise (1) is about the contents of our perceptual experiences of other people. Premise (2) plausibly follows from premise (1). There are sources of justification other than perception, but none seem like a plausible source of non-inferential justification for beliefs about other minds. Premise (3) is prima facie plausible.

The idea behind premise (4) is this. Suppose you know how someone behaves in some circumstances on the basis of a perceptual experience. Say he is fidgeting with random objects and shifting his gaze hither and thither. Suppose you conclude that he is agitated. Either you have reason to think that such behavior in such circumstances indicates agitation or you do not. If you do not, then your belief that he is agitated is not justified. If you do, however, then you must have acquired this knowledge somehow. But it is unclear how you could acquire this knowledge without having had justification for attributing agitation to people behaving similarly in similar circumstances. And obviously this raises the the very same question of what your justification for attributing agitation was then. Given (1) through (4), (5) follows.

Whatever its force as a skeptical argument, the traditional problem of other minds is a useful tool for classifying different approaches to our knowledge of other minds. Behaviorists deny (3). Proponents of the argument from analogy, theory theorists, and simulationists all challenge (4) in one way or another. Proponents of the argument from analogy think that correlations between our own mental states, behavior, and circumstances suffice. Theory theorists assimilate the problem of other minds to the general problem of theory confirmation.

Simulationists attribute to us a mechanism by which we use our own minds to simulate the minds of others.

In this paper I want to explore the prospects of an alternative approach, the perceptual theory of our knowledge of other minds.[2] The perceptual theory is usefully separated into two theses. There is a psychological thesis about the contents of some of our sensory perceptual experiences of other people:

> Psychological Thesis: Some of our sensory perceptual experiences of other people represent them as being in certain mental states.

And there is an epistemological thesis about the kind of justification such sensory perceptual experiences provide for beliefs about others' mental states:

> Epistemological Thesis: If one has a sensory perceptual experience as of another person being in a certain mental state, then it prima facie immediately justifies believing that person is in that mental state.

Both theses are important. The Psychological Thesis implies that (1) in the problem is false. This removes support from (2), but it does not imply that it is false. The Epistemological Thesis suggests a way for (2) to be false. But without the Psychological Thesis it does not imply that premise (2) is false, since for all it says we might not have any sensory perceptual experiences as of another person being in a certain mental state. The Psychological Thesis and the

[2] Recent defenders of the perceptual theory include: (Carruthers 2015), (Gallagher 2008), (Green 2010), (Krueger 2012), (Krueger and Overgaard 2012), (McDowell 1978), (McNeill 2012, 2015), (Smith 2010, 2015), (Stout 2010), and (Zahavi 2011, 2014). (Bohl 2015), (Jacob 2011), and (Spaulding 2015) criticize specific versions of the perceptual theory.

Epistemological Thesis together, however, do imply that (2) in the problem is false. Together they give us a view about our access to others' mental states on which it is at least sometimes perceptual rather than inferential.

I will give reasons for thinking that the Psychological Thesis is true, but that the Epistemological Thesis is false. So the perceptual theory does not resolve the traditional problem of other minds. I will also sketch what I take to be a promising variant on the perceptual theory.

Here is the plan. (§1) I explain why I find the Psychological Thesis plausible. (§2) I connect the Epistemological Thesis to more general questions about the relationship between the contents of an experience and what that experience can immediately justify. Roughly: Do experiences prima facie immediately justify all of their contents? If not all, then which ones? (§3) I motivate a negative answer to the first question. (§4) I develop an account addressing the second question. (§5) I appeal to the account in arguing against the Epistemological Thesis. (§6) I sketch a variant on the Epistemological Thesis that seems to me to do as good a job at defusing the traditional problem of other minds.

1. The Psychological Thesis

One way to support the Psychological Thesis--that some of our sensory perceptual experiences of other people represent them as being in certain mental states--is by first person reflection on examples. Consider the following scenario:

> You are walking with a companion around Brickell Key. A dolphin surfaces nearby making a loud noise. Your friend--brow rising, jaw dropping, eyes opening wide--turns

> body, head, and gaze toward the noise and reaches toward a camera hanging from her neck. You immediately know the following: your friend is surprised by the noise, sees the dolphin, and intends to grab her camera to take a picture of it.

On the face of it, you attribute the mental states of being surprised by the noise, seeing the dolphin, and intending to grab the camera on the basis of your sensory perceptual experiences of your friend. You perceive the surprise in her face, what she sees from her gaze, and what she intends by her motion. At least this is what first person reflection suggests. And I think first person reflection does provide some evidence in favor of the view that some of our sensory perceptual experiences of other people represent them as being in certain mental states.

But first person reflection is limited in two ways. First, some philosophers think that first person reflection isn't very reliable, particularly when it comes to making fine grained claims about the natures of mental states and processes.[3] One might worry that first person reflection will not be able to distinguish between perceptions of and immediate judgments about others' mental states. Maybe you do not have this worry. But the fact that some philosophers do reveals at least a dialectical limit to appeals to first person reflection. Second, even if first person reflection is reliable, it will not tell us anything about the reliability of our sensory perceptual experiences attributing mental states to others. It will tell us that we have such experiences; it will not tell us about their reliability. One might think that this is a separate question anyway. But, first, it would be a small victory to establish the existence of sensory perceptual states attributing mental states to others and leave it completely open how accurate they are about the mental states they attribute. And, second, if we have sensory perceptual knowledge about others'

[3] (Schwitzgebel 2008) challenges the reliability of introspection. (Bayne and Spener 2010) is a measured defense of the reliability of introspection that seems to me to undermine Schwitzgebel's more radical claims while still suggesting significant limits to how we should appeal to introspection in assessing theses such as the Psychological Thesis.

mental states, not just sensory perceptual justification for beliefs about others' mental states, then by all reasonable accounts reliability is a requirement.[4]

So first person reflection requires supplementation. There is a large body of psychological literature on our impressions of others' mental states that provides this supplementation. Here I am using "impression" so that it covers both immediate judgments and perceptions. The psychological literature that I will review makes a strong empirical case for thinking that at least some of these impressions are sensory perceptual experiences. That is, it makes a strong empirical case for the Psychological Thesis. In particular it gives us reason for thinking that some of our sensory perceptual experiences of others' represent the sorts of mental states highlighted in the story about Brickell Key: emotions, states of seeing or visually attending, and motor intentions.

Before reviewing some of the relevant literature, it is worth stepping back and asking just what in it might support the Psychological Thesis. What might empirical psychology show that counts in favor of the Psychological Thesis? There are at least three questions that we need to keep in mind when looking into the psychological literature:

> The Ecological Question: does our immediate environment contain stimuli that encode information about the mental states of others?
>
> The Computational Question: do we have psychological mechanisms that take these stimuli as inputs and yield impressions of others' mental states as outputs?

[4] I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to make this point explicit.

The Phenomenological Question: do these impressions of others' mental states have the characteristics of perceptual experiences?

If all three questions are answered affirmatively, then that counts in favor of the Psychological Thesis. And there is an order of dependence among them. An affirmative answer to the Phenomenological Question depends on an affirmative answer to the Computational Question: if we do not have mechanisms that result in impressions of others' mental states, then we will not have impressions of others' mental states with the characteristics of perceptual experiences. And an affirmative answer to the Computational Question depends on an affirmative answer to the Ecological Question: if there are no stimuli encoding information about others' mental states, then we will not have mechanisms that take stimuli encoding information about others' mental states as inputs and yield impressions of others' mental states as outputs.

Now let's review the psychological literature on our impressions of others' mental states with these questions in mind.

The Ecological Question asks whether our immediate environment contains stimuli that encode information about the mental states of others. There is ample evidence in favor of a positive answer--particularly in relation to to emotional states, states of seeing or visual attention, and motor intentions. Facial expressions cue emotional states. Gazes cue states of seeing or visual attention. And bodily motions cue motor intentions.

In 1976 the psychologists Paul Ekman Wallace Friesen published a widely used series, Pictures of Facial Affect, that illustrate facial expressions cuing different emotional states (Ekman and Friesen 1976). (Ekman and Friesen 2003) provides the following helpful summary description of the facial expressions associated with disgust: upper lip is raised, lower lip is raised and pushed up to the upper lip, or is lowered and slightly protruding, nose is wrinkled,

cheeks are raised, lines show below the lower eyelid, and the lid is pushed up but not tense, the brow is lowered, lowering the upper lid. Why count such facial expressions as stimuli that encode the emotional states of others? Roughly: emotional states cause the changes in facial expression and the changes in facial expression cause changes in our sensory receptors. Facial expressions carry information about emotional states in a format that can make a difference to our senses. Hence they are sensible cues for emotional states.[5]

Similar points can be made about gaze and motion. The direction of a person's gaze--as well as the direction of their head and body--carry information about states of seeing and visual attention in a format that can make a difference to our senses (Emery 2000, Langton 2000, Langton et al 2000, Frischen et al 2007). (Barrett et al 2005) demonstrated cross-cultural sensitivity to motion cues for intentional activities such as chasing, fighting, courting, following, guarding, and playing. The relevant features of motion include: position, velocity, heading or orientation, and vorticity or change in heading. Whether two agents are perceived as chasing, fighting, courting, following, guarding, or playing depends on factors such as mean absolute velocity across them, mean absolute vorticity across them, relative distance between them, their relative velocity, their relative vorticity, their relative heading, and the relative angle between one individual's heading and another's' current position.[6]

The Computational Question asks whether we have psychological mechanisms that take stimuli encoding information about others' mental states as inputs and yield impressions of others' mental states as outputs.

[5] For further discussion of the nature of these cues see (Etcoff and Magee 1992, Calder et al 1996, Calder et al 2000, Calder et al 2001, Adolphs 2002, and Calder and Young 2005)

[6] (Gao et al 2009) reports on a series of fascinating experiments that reveal more information about motion cues for chasing behavior. (Tremoulet and Feldman 2000) report on motion cues for the perception of intentionality in one object.

(Etcoff and Magee 1992) provide evidence that perceptions of facial expressions classify them into emotional categories: similar to the categorical perception of phonemes in streams of sound, when subjects are presented with a series of faces that vary relatively continuously along physical dimensions they identify sharp boundaries corresponding to the expression of different emotions. (Calder et al 2001) bolster the case by showing that extracting information about emotion from facial expressions is computationally feasible using mechanisms known to be psychologically realistic. (Adolphs 2002) reviews evidence about the neural structures that might implement such mechanisms.

There are reasons to think mechanisms for generating impressions of states of seeing or visual attention and of motor intentions from the available sensible cues are adaptive. It is good to know when a predator sees you (Baron-Cohen 1995), and it is good to know when a predator is chasing you (Barrett et al 2005, Scholl and Gao 2013). (Itier and Batty 2009) review studies of the neural structures that might implement mechanisms for generating impressions of states of seeing or visual attention, and (Blakemore and Decety 2001) do the same for the neural structures that might implement mechanisms for generating impressions of intentions. (Langton et al 2000) also review behavioral evidence that we form impressions of another's visual attention on the basis of gaze cues: our own visual attention reflexively shifts to match another's visual attention as indicated by such cues. (Becchio et al 2007, Becchio 2008, and Scholl and Gao 2013) demonstrate how perception of motion cues directly influences behavior in ways that suggest we are forming impressions of others' intentions on the basis of them.

The Phenomenological Question asks whether the impressions we form of others' mental states have the characteristics of perceptual experiences. Uncontroversial examples of perceptual experiences--e.g. seeing shapes, hearing phonemes, and feeling textures--have a number of characteristic features. They tend to be fast, automatic, belief-independent,

phenomenally conscious, keyed to sensory input, direct influences on action, caused by certain brain processes, and subject to perceptual effects such as perceptual adaptation, pop out in search, stroop-like effects, and perceptual priming relations. If our impressions of others' mental states share some of these features, then that gives us some reason to think that these impressions are perceptual experiences. The more shared features, the stronger the reason.

Some commonalities emerge from armchair reflection. Take belief-independence. This is illustrated by the following well-known phenomenon: the Muller-Lyer lines look to be different in length even to those who know full well that they are the same in length. Now consider this scenario. You observe someone making the expression of disgust described above. He looks disgusted to you. You form the belief that he is disgusted. Then you learn that he is atypical and the facial expression he is making is the one he makes when he is surprised. So you form the belief that he is surprised. This makes your original belief that he is disgusted go away. But, it seems, it does not make the man stop looking to be disgusted. He looks just the same. Imagine that at a later time he makes that expression when he sees you enter the room. I expect you'd say to yourself, "he looks disgusted, but I'm not to worry, since I know he is really just surprised." Reflection on this scenario suggests that you represent that the man is disgusted in a belief-independent way. This counts as a bit of evidence that the impression is a perceptual experience.Similar points apply to impressions of states of seeing or visual attention and motor intentions. Suppose you have an impression as of someone staring at you. Then you learn that the person is blind. It still might look as if the person is staring at you. And consider the "made you flinch" effect. Someone moves as if they are about to hit you. You flinch because it looks as if they are going to hit you. They say "made you flinch!" and laugh. Then they do it again! And once again you flinch because, even though you do not believe that they will hit you, it does continue to look as if they will.

Beyond such armchair reflections there are also numerous psychological studies that reveal commonalities between our impressions of others' mental states and perceptual experiences. Many of these studies focus on the recruitment of common neural structures; see (Adolphs 2002, Itier and Batty 2009, and Blakemore and Decety 2001) for reviews. Another large body of studies focuses on demonstrating the existence of various perceptual effects in relation to our impressions of others' mental states.[7] Here are some examples.

Popout. Some stimuli pop out of visual arrays in that they can be successfully identified independently of the number of distractors. This is a distinctively perceptual achievement: the pop out consists in the stimuli perceptually appearing differently from the distractors surrounding them.

(Frischen et al 2008) reviews evidence suggesting that facial expressions of emotions pop out. The so-called "face in the crowd" effect is related: angry faces pop out more readily than other faces (Fox et al 2000, Ohman et al 2001, Pinkham et al 2010, Dickens and Lipp 2014). Why not think that it is just a certain configuration of the face that pops out? The reason is that the phenomenon only occurs for configurations associated with particular emotional states such as anger. (Eifuku et al 2007) report on research suggesting that there is a pop out effect for gazes that are directed toward the observer. And (Scholl and Gao 2013) report on a related attentional bias toward chasers in a crowd.

Adaptation. The idea of adaptation is best appreciated by considering some examples. If you stare at a red surface for a while then look at a white surface you will see green. If you stick your hand in warm water for a while then stick it in room temperature water you will feel cold. In each case there is a sensory process--seeing red, feeling warmth--and its opposite--seeing

[7] See (Block 2014) for an excellent discussion of the significance of perceptual effects, particularly adaptation, in supporting the Psychological Thesis.

green, feeling cold--and adaptation to the one makes stimuli that otherwise would have been neutral between the two cause the other. This is a distinctively perceptual effect.

A number of studies have demonstrated perceptual adaptation for facial expressions of emotion. (Butler et al 2008) is an example: they produced images of a woman with either an angry, neutral, or fearful facial expression. If subjects stared at the angry facial expression for a while then saw the neutral facial expression they saw it as fearful. If subjects stared at the fearful facial expression for a while then saw the neutral facial expression they saw it as angry. Key to their study is that they did not find perceptual adaptation to facial expressions that failed to correspond to any emotion.[8] Similar adaptation effects have been found for gaze: subjects stared at a clearly rightward looking face, then were presented with a marginally rightward looking face, and because of adaptation formed the impression that it was looking straight ahead (Jenkins et al 2006, Seyama and Nagayama 2006, Frischen et al 2007).

Stroop Effects. If your task is to name the color of each word on a list, then you will be able to perform it faster when the words are written in the color they name than when not. This is the Stroop effect. The effect is due to a conflict between perceptually recognizing colors and perceptually recognizing words.

(Etkin et al 2006) report on Stroop-like conflicts between recognizing facial expressions and recognizing words written across them. If your task is to identify the emotion expressed by the depicted face, then you will be able to perform it faster when the emotion is the one named by the word than when not. As with the original Stroop effect, presumably this effect is due to a conflict between perceptually recognizing emotional expressions and perceptually recognizing words.[9] (Langton 2000, Langton et al 2000) report on stroop-like effects for gaze: subjects were

[8] Additional relevant studies can be found in (Fox and Barton 2007, Rhodes et al 2010, and Webster and Macleod 2011).
[9] See also (Haas et al 2006, Ovaysikia et al 2010).

asked to report either on another's' gaze direction or another's head direction; when the two were incongruent there were stroop-like interference effects on reaction times. (Becchio et al 2007) report on direct stroop-like effects on one's own motor performance in tasks incongruent with observed motor intentions of another.

Priming. Priming is a form of implicit memory in which earlier perception of a stimulus influences later processing of it or related stimuli. Word fragment completion tasks illustrate the phenomenon. Subjects are shown a list of words. Then they are given the task of identifying words such as "hexagon" on the basis of fragments such as "_ex_g_n." Performance is better for words that were on the list. This is due to the influence of priming. The improvement is independent of subjects' ability to recognize whether a word was on earlier the list or not (Tulving et al 1982). This is an aspect of the implicitness of priming.

(Werheld et al 2005) performed the following experiment: they showed their subject a face, then a neutral stimulus, and then another face which their subjects were asked to classify as angry or happy. They found priming effects: subjects were faster at classifying the second face if its emotional expression matched that of the first face. (Castiello 2003) reports on priming effects on one's own motor intentions that result both from the observations of another's actions and another's gaze; see also (Becchio et al 2008).

In light of the foregoing I think we should accept the Psychological Thesis that some of our sensory perceptual experiences of other people represent them as being in certain mental states.[10]

2. Immediate and Mediate Justification

[10] The Psychological Thesis is an instance of the more general thesis that some sensory perceptual experiences have "high level" contents. (Bayne 2009) and (Siegel 2006) defend the general thesis.

Consider the following two cases:

[Immediate] You have a perceptual experience as of a red light ahead. You take your experience at face value and thereby form the belief that there is a red light ahead.

[Mediate] Your driving companion tells you that if you run into any red lights you will miss an imminent meeting. You have a perceptual experience as of a red light ahead. You put the two pieces of information together and thereby form the belief that you will miss an imminent meeting.

In [Immediate] your belief that there is a red light ahead is immediately justified by your perceptual experience. By saying that this belief is immediately justified I mean that it is justified in a way that is independent of the justification you have for other beliefs. By saying that it is immediately justified by your perceptual experience I mean that it is your having the perceptual experience that makes it the case that your belief is immediately justified.[11]

In [Mediate] your belief that you will miss an imminent meeting is mediately justified by an inference. Your perceptual experience justifies you in believing that there is a red light ahead. Your companion's testimony justifies you in believing that if there is a red light ahead then you will miss an imminent meeting. You have justification for believing that you will miss an imminent meeting by inferring that you will from these two other pieces of information. The justification is mediate because it depends on your having justification for the two other beliefs.

Now consider the Brickell Key example. In light of the considerations presented in the previous section, I think it is reasonable to say that in this case you have a sensory perceptual

[11] Dogmatism (Pryor 2000) and phenomenal conservatism (Huemer 2001) are two general theories of perceptual justification that support these judgments about [Immediate].

experience representing that your friend is surprised by the noise, sees the dolphin, and intends to grab her camera. Should we also say that your sensory perceptual experience immediately justifies believing that your friend is surprised by the noise, sees the dolphin, and intends to grab her camera?

The answer is not so clear. Let us assume that you do not have to make an inference. That your friend is surprised by the noise, sees the dolphin, and intends to grab her camera are part of your perceptual experience's representational content, so you can form beliefs about her surprise, visual experience, and intention just by taking your experience at face value, without making an inference. Or so I propose we assume. My question is whether your justification for these beliefs is *nonetheless* mediate. Does it depend on justification you have for other beliefs?

I see this as an instance of a more general question:

> Question 1: Given some perceptual experience, is there a distinction between those of its contents it can immediately justify and those of its contents it can at most mediately justify?

If the answer to Question 1 is no, then the thing to say about the Brickell Key case is that your perceptual experience does immediately justify beliefs about your friend's mental states. More generally, we should accept the Epistemological Thesis that if one has a sensory perceptual experience as of another person being in a certain mental state, then it prima facie immediately justifies believing that person is in that mental state.

If the answer to Question 1 is yes, however, then we need to address another question:

Question 2: Given that the answer to Question 1 is yes, then what principle determines the difference between the two?

How we answer Question 2 will determine what we should say about the Brickell Key case and about the Epistemological Thesis more generally.

3. Epistemic Egalitarianism and Epistemic Elitism

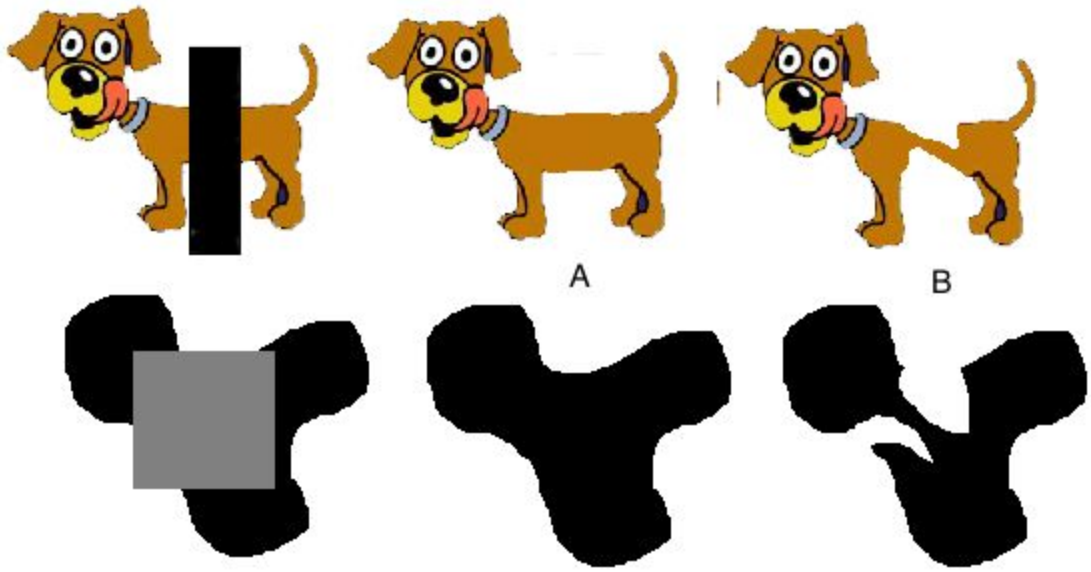
Question 1 asks whether given some perceptual experience there is a distinction between those of its content it can immediately justify and those of its contents it can at most mediately justify. It is a yes/no question. So there are two possible views. According to one the contents of perceptual experience are epistemically equal, and according to the other the contents of perceptual experience are epistemically unequal. I'll call these two views Egalitarianism and Elitism.

Egalitarianism: If a perceptual experience can immediately justify believing that p, then p just needs to be part of its representational content.

Elitism: If a perceptual experience can immediately justify believing that p, then p needs to meet some condition over and above being part of its representational content.

Egalitarianism is plausibly thought of as the default view. It is difficult to see why one should start out thinking that a perceptual experience might immediately justify believing only some of its contents. In this section, however, I will provide some motivation to endorse Elitism.[12]

Consider the first members in the following sequences of pictures and imagine being in corresponding real world scenarios--e.g. seeing a dog partially occluded by a bar and seeing a blob partially occluded by a square surface:



Both are examples of amodal completion. In the first it looks as if the dog continues behind the bar. You do not see the middle of the dog but your visual experience does represent that the dog continues behind the bar in a specific way--e.g. way A rather than way B. In the second it looks as if the blob continues behind the square. You do not see the part of the blob behind the square but your visual experience does represent that the blob continues in a specific way--way A rather than way B.

[12] The literature on perceptual justification does not include many discussions of the dispute between Egalitarianism and Elitism. Both positions are occupied: (Huemer 2000) and (Silins 2013) endorse forms of Egalitarianism; (Pryor 2000). (Brogaard 2013), and (Chudnoff 2013, 2014) endorse forms of Elitism.

The following strike me as plausible judgments about these cases. You have justification for believing that the dog continues behind the bar in way A rather than way B. You lack justification for believing that the blob continues behind the square in way A rather than way B. You might be strongly inclined to think the blob continues in way A and if you were naive about the matter and took it to continue that way you'd have an excuse. But I find it difficult to see how your experience justifies believing it to continue one way rather than another. It is a random blob and you do not see the part behind the square. Dogs however have a familiar nature that renders way A more likely than way B.

What explains the difference in justification? Here is a plausible explanation: in both cases your justification depends on background beliefs about the occluded parts of the seen objects. In the case of the dog you have justified background beliefs because dogs are a familiar kind. In the case of the blob you do not have justified background beliefs because random blobs are not a familiar kind.

The foregoing counts against Egalitarianism in two ways. First, consider the proposition that the dog continues behind the bar in way A rather than way B. This is part of the content of your visual experience. And you do have justification for believing it. But the justification seems to be mediate rather than immediate. It depends on the justification you have for background beliefs about the shapes of dogs. Second, consider the proposition that the blob continues behind the square in way A rather than way B. This is part of the content of your visual experience. But you lack justification, and so lack immediate justification, for believing it. The reason is that you lack the required supplementary justification for background beliefs about the shapes of random blobs. So there is some motivation for believing Elitism rather than Egalitarianism.[13]

[13] I provide additional motivation in a work in progress titled *The Cave: The Philosophical Significance of Perceptual Learning*.

4. The Presentational Constraint

In the previous section I made some epistemic judgments about your experience of the partially occluded dog. In this section I will defend a view about what non-epistemic properties explain the epistemic properties attributed in these judgments. This will be my answer to Question 2 isolated above.

The following are plausible claims about your visual experience:

[a] It makes it seem that the dog has a tail.

[b] It makes it seem that the dog has a middle part behind the bar.

[c] It makes you visually aware of the dog's tail.

[d] It does not make you visually aware of the dog's middle part behind the bar.

Claims [a] and [b] are about the contents of your visual experience. Claims [c] and [d] are about the objects of your visual awareness. I use "is visually aware of" and "sees" equivalently. So [c] and [d] might also be put as follows: it makes you see the dog's tail; it does not make you see the dog's middle part behind the bar.

Claims [c] and [d] are about what your visual experience does and does not make you visually aware of. Visual awareness is a relation. So claims [c] and [d] are not just about intrinsic properties of your visual experience. Whether claim [c], for example, is true depends on whether there really is a dog's tail that you are seeing. It will be useful to introduce analogs of claims [c] and [d] that are just about intrinsic properties of your visual experience:

[c*] It seems to make you visually aware of the dog's tail.

[d*] It does not seem to make you visually aware of the dog's middle part behind the bar.

Claims [c*] and [d*] are just as plausible as claims [c] and [d]. Take [d] and [d*]. It is not as if [d] is true but you are deceived about the matter, as if it seems to you that you can see behind the bar but really you cannot. Your experience does not just fail to make you see behind the bar. That you fail to see behind the bar is part of its felt character. Further, as desired, claims [c*] and [d*] are just as much about the intrinsic properties your visual experience as [a] and [b]. Whether claim [c*], for example, is true does not depend on whether there really is a dog's tail that you are seeing. It just depends on whether it seems as if there is.

According to claim [c*] your visual experience seems to make you visually aware of the chunk of reality that corresponds to the proposition that, according to claim [a], your visual experience represents. And according to claim [d*] your visual experience does not seem to make you visually aware of the chunk of reality that corresponds to the proposition that, according to claim [b], your visual experience also represents. It will be useful to have a brief way of putting this difference. I will make use of the notion of a truth-maker for a proposition. So another way to record the foregoing observations is to say: your visual experience both represents and seems to make you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that the dog has a tail, but your visual experience represents without seeming to make you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that the dog has a middle part behind the bar.[14]

In my view this difference between the two contents provides the key to elaborating Epistemic Elitism. The discussion from the previous section suggests that your visual

[14] The characteristic of experience that I am highlighting is a phenomenal analog of what (Johnston 2001, 2006) calls the "disclosure of truthmakers." See (Chudnoff 2013) for references to and discussion of additional historical and contemporary writers who recognize this characteristic of experience.

experience cannot immediately justify you in believing that the dog has a middle part behind the bar. But plausibly it can immediately justify you in believing that the dog has a tail. Why is there this difference? In my view the difference is that your experience seems to present you with the chunk of reality corresponding to the claim that the the dog has a tail, but your experience does not seem to present you with with the chunk of reality corresponding to the claim that the dog has a middle part behind the bar. Or, to put it in terms of awareness and truth-making: your experience seems to make you aware of a truth-maker for the claim that the dog has a tail, but your experience does not seem to make you aware of a truth-maker for the claim that the dog has a middle part behind the bar.

Generalizing yields the following answer to the question of what principle determines the difference between those contents a perceptual experience can immediately justify and those contents a perceptual experience can at most mediately justify:

> Presentational Constraint: If a perceptual experience can immediately justify believing that p, then it must both make it seem as if p and makes it seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for p.

So the idea is that in order for a perceptual experience to immediately justify believing that p then in addition to representing that p it must also be felt as making you aware of the chunk of reality that p is about. When a perceptual experience meets this further constraint with respect to a proposition p it is natural to describe it as not merely representing that p but as also presenting that p. Hence the name “Presentational Constraint.”

The balance of this section is dedicated to elaborating and motivating the Presentational Constraint. The partially occluded dog example that I used to introduce it should indicate how I understand the constraint. But I would like to say more about the notion of awareness.

As I understand it, awareness is a determinable two place relation between a person and an object of arbitrary category--e.g. individual, event, property, state of affairs, etc.--some determinations of which are seeing, hearing, and feeling. I do not propose to attempt any analysis of awareness into more basic notions. But I would like to indicate three aspects of any instance of awareness.[15]

First, if an experience makes you aware of something then that thing contributes toward determining the phenomenal character of that experience. Take seeing construed as visual awareness. If you see something, then that thing looks some way to you. It contributes toward determining the phenomenal character of your visual experience. Or: it makes some difference to your visual phenomenology. One can approach this relation from the other side and say that if an experience makes you aware of something then it at least partially depends on that thing for its phenomenal character. Maybe there is unconscious seeing. In that case not all instances of seeing are instances of visual awareness in my sense. I see no substantive dispute here. I am simply choosing to focus on a conscious phenomenon.

Second, if an experience makes you aware of something then the overall phenomenology of the experience differentiates that thing from a background of other things (cf. Dretske 1969, Siegel 2006). Consider what happens when something is visually camouflaged. When something is visually camouflaged it contributes to your visual phenomenology along with other things, but it does not do so in such a way as to stand out. In that case you cannot see it.

[15] See (Chudnoff 2013) for further discussion.

In order to see something it must not be visually camouflaged. The differentiation requirement is simply a generalization of this requirement on seeing to all forms of awareness.

Third, if an experience makes you aware of something then, provided you can entertain demonstrative thoughts at all, it enables you to entertain simple demonstrative thoughts about that thing (cf. Siegel 2006, Tye 2009). Contrast the thoughts one might express using the following sentences: “The tallest man in the room is over 6 ft tall,” “That man is over 6 ft tall.” The first thought picks out an individual by specifying him with a description “the tallest man in the room.” The second thought picks out an individual not by specifying him with a description, but, as it were, by directly pointing at him. Suppose you do not stand in the awareness relation to anyone in the room. Then it looks like you will not be able to think the thought expressed by “That man is over 6 ft tall.’ How would your use of “that” connect to a particular individual? Still, you might express the first, descriptive thought. Now suppose you see all the people in the room. Then you might very well be able to think the thought expressed by “That man is over 6 ft tall.” You can exploit your visual awareness to connect your use of “that” to a particular individual. This is what I have in mind in saying that awareness enables demonstrative thoughts. [16]

So in general if an experience makes you aware of something, then it phenomenally differentiates that thing from a background and enables you to entertain simple demonstrative thoughts about it. If an experience seems to make you aware of something then it feels as if it does these things. There is a distinctive felt quality to awareness. To make it salient just imagine a case of seeing something then imagine a duplicate hallucination. The hallucination retains the distinctive felt quality to awareness--you have an experience that seems to make you visually aware of something, but that does not really do so.

[16] Here I remain neutral on the relations between visual awareness and simple demonstrative thought on the one hand and attention on the other. See (Block 2013, 2014, Tye 2014) for discussion.

The Presentational Constraint is about seeming awareness not awareness. There are two key differences. First, if an experience makes you aware of an F, then there is an x such that x is an F and you aware aware of x, but if an experience seems to make you aware of an F, then there might be no x such that x is an F and you are aware of x. This is why seeming awareness is, but awareness is not, compatible with hallucination. Second, if an experience makes you aware of an F, and if the F is a G, then the experience also makes you aware of a G, but if an experience seems to make you aware of an F and there is an F of which you are aware which is also a G, it does not follow that the experience also seems to make you aware of a G. This second difference is even more important than the first. Suppose you see a speck on the horizon and it is a person. It follows that your experience makes you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that there is a person on the horizon. But it does not follow that your experience makes it seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that there is a person on the horizon. It might just seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that there is something or other on the horizon. If this is so and your experience nonetheless represents that there is a person on the horizon, then by the Presentational Constraint, it does not immediately justify believing that content. If it represents that there is something or other on the horizon, however, then it might immediately justify you in believing that content.

With these clarifications about what it amounts to in place now I would like to motivate accepting the Presentational Constraint by examining how it suggests treating the occluded dog case. You have a visual experience that makes it seem as if the dog has a middle part behind the bar, but your experience does not immediately justify believing this is so. The dog's middle part behind the bar does not contribute to the phenomenal character of your experience, does not stand out from a background of other objects, and is not a candidate for simple

demonstration. The phenomenal character of your overall experience suggests the dog has a middle part behind the bar. But that middle part behind the bar is not causing you to have this phenomenal character. The dog stands out from a background. But the dog's middle part does not. Further, you can simply demonstrate the dog and you can pick out the dog's middle part with the description "that dog's middle part," but you cannot simply demonstrate the middle part. Further, all of these failures are phenomenally manifest: it does not seem as if the middle part looks any way to you, as if it stands out from a background, or as if you can simply demonstrate it. So the middle part behind the bar fails to meet the conditions on being an apparent object of awareness.

5. The Epistemological Thesis

My argument against the Epistemological Thesis is simple and given the foregoing probably unsurprising:

(1) If a perceptual experience can immediately justify believing that p, then it must both make it seem as if p and make it seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for p.

(2) Even if a perceptual experience makes it seem as if another person is in a certain mental state, it does not make it seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that that person is in that mental state.

(3) So it is not the case that if one has a sensory perceptual experience as of another person being in a certain mental state, then it prima facie immediately justifies believing that person is in that mental state.

Premise (1) is the Presentational Constraint defended above. Premise (2) is an independent premise that I believe is supported by reflection on cases. The conclusion (3) follows from (1) and (2), and it is the negation of the Epistemological Thesis.

The balance of this section is dedicated to supporting (2). I will proceed as follows. First I will consider what our sensory perceptual experiences might make us aware of. I will give reasons for thinking that even if a perceptual experience makes it seem as if another person is in a certain mental state, it does not in fact make you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that that person is in that mental state. Consider visual perception. Even if visual perceptual experiences represent that others are in mental states, they are not experiences in which we count as standing in the seeing or visual awareness relation to those mental states. This is a point about what is visible. And more generally my first claim is about what are objects of sensory awareness. Second, I will draw from this first claim the conclusion that even if a perceptual experience makes it seem as if another person is in a certain mental state, it does not make it seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that that person is in that mental state. This is (2) in the argument against the Epistemological Thesis. It is a claim about how things seem in an experience not how things are. An experience might not make one aware of an F but might nonetheless make it seem as if it makes one aware of an F. This is what happens when one hallucinates an F. My claim here is that this is not what happens when we have sensory perceptual experiences representing the mental states of others. My reason for making this claim is that I do not think in having experiences as of others' mental states we are systematically deluded about what we can see or more generally what objects of sensory awareness there are. Sensory perceptual experiences as of others' mental states are perfectly ordinary experiences and should not be assimilated to hallucinations.

Let us focus on an example. You have a visual experience that represents that your friend sees a dolphin. Why doubt that your visual experience itself counts as an instance of seeing your friend's state of seeing a dolphin? The reasoning derives from reflection on the nature of awareness. Recall that I argued for three conditions on an experience e making its subject S aware of an object o: (i) e's phenomenology must depend on o; (ii) e's phenomenology must be so structured as to differentiate o from a background; and (iii) e must satisfy the first two conditions in a way that enables S to entertain simple demonstrative thoughts about o, provided S can entertain such thoughts at all. Your visual experience representing that your friend sees a dolphin fails to meet all these conditions with respect to your friend's mental state of seeing a dolphin. Your friend's gaze is differentiated from a background. And you can refer to your friend's mental state of seeing the dolphin as the state of seeing that results from that gaze. But the state of seeing itself is not differentiated from a background. There is no way the seeing itself looks that distinguishes it from other things. If it makes sense to say it looks any way at all, then it looks like the gaze. But the gaze is different from the state of seeing, since the gaze is a feature of your friend's face and the seeing is a feature of your friend's mind. Further, you cannot entertain simple demonstrative thoughts about your friend's state of seeing just on the basis of your experience. You can pick it out by its relation to the gaze. But this is a partly descriptive thought, not a simple demonstrative thought.

Similar points can be made about emotions and motor intentions. I have no doubt that we represent them in sensory experience and that we know about them at least partly on the basis of sensory experience. But they themselves are not objects of sensory awareness. To say that they are goes well beyond what first person reflection or the empirical literature supports. So there is reason to doubt that experiences representing others' mental states make us aware of those mental states in the sense of awareness that is at issue here. And, for the reasons

given above, I would draw as a conclusion that these experiences do not seem to make us aware of mental states in the corresponding sense of seeming awareness that is at issue here. So there is reason to believe premise (2) in the argument against the Epistemological Thesis.

On the view I am working toward we have sensory perceptual experiences that attribute mental states to others, but these experiences are not ones in which we seem to be aware of--see, hear, smell, etc--the mental states themselves. It is worth comparing this view with that found in the phenomenological tradition, particularly in the works of Husserl and Stein. Dan Zahavi provides a helpful overview.

Zahavi notes that, "on Husserl's standard model, we have to distinguish between signitive, pictorial, and perceptual ways of intending an object: I can talk about Mount Fuji, although I have never seen it; I can see a detailed drawing of Mount Fuji; or I can perceive Mount Fuji myself."[17] Zahavi calls perceptual states attributing mental states to others states of empathy and raises the natural question: where in Husserl's classification do they fit? Here is how he answers:

> The answer given by both Husserl and Stein is that empathy is both like and unlike perception. Empathy is unlike perception in that it does not give us its object, the empathized experience, originally….However, although empathy differs from perception by not giving us the object originally, it does resemble perception insofar as its object, say, the empathized pain or distress, is given directly, unmediated and non-inferentially as present here and now. To exemplify, consider a situation where a friend tells me that he has lost his mother, and I become aware of his distress. What kind of awareness is this? I do not see the distress the same way I see the colour of his shirt, rather I see the distress ''in'' his pained countenance….Although I certainly do lack a first-person

[17] (Zahavi 2014), pg. 134.

> experience of the distress—it is not given as my distress—it is nevertheless the case that I experience rather than imagine or infer my friend's distress.

Zahavi's presentation might suggest that Husserl's and Stein's main point is that states of empathy attribute mental states to others but they are not like having those mental states for oneself. This point is surely correct, but there is more to their view. I think that Zahavi uses terms such as "awareness" and "experience" in too unregimented a way to capture precisely what more. Distinguishing between having an experience that represents that p and having an experience that both represents that p and makes it seem as if one is aware of a truth-maker for p helps. In these terms what happens in the example Zahavi gives is that you have an experience that represents that your friend is in distress, but your experience does not make it seem to you as if it makes you aware of the distress itself.

Trying to capture this distinction by saying that you see the distress "in" your friend's pained countenance and drawing an analogy with seeing a drawing of Mt. Fuji can be misleading. A drawing of Mt. Fuji reproduces some of its visible characteristics, such as the shape it projects to certain viewpoints. Similarly, when you see yourself in a mirror or see a celebrity on television you and your mirror image share visible characteristics as does the celebrity and the television image. Distress and a pained countenance do not share visible characteristics. Seeing one thing in another thing counts as an indirect form of awareness. But it seems misleading to me to describe the kind of access we have to others' mental states in this way. It is neither direct nor indirect awareness of their mental states. Rather, it is just experiences as of them having mental states.

One way to resist this line of reasoning is to defend an alternative metaphysics of mental states. Take states of seeing or visual attention and gazes. I've been assuming that states of

seeing or visual attention are states of one's mind not one's face and that gazes are states of one's face not one's mind. Seeing a gaze cues contents about states of seeing or visual attention. But they are distinct things. An alternative metaphysical picture is that gazes are literally parts of states of seeing or visual attention. States of seeing or visual attention are wholes with some inner parts--e.g. phenomenology--and some outer parts such as gazes. If this is the metaphysical picture you accept, then it is open to you to say that sensory perceptual experiences as of another's state of seeing or visual attention do make us aware of states of seeing or visual attention themselves: they make us aware of them by virtue of making us aware of gazes that are parts of them. Just as you count as seeing a whole tomato in virtue of seeing its facing parts, you count as seeing a whole state of seeing or visual attention in virtue of seeing its outward part consisting of a gaze. One might make similar points about intentions and motions or emotions and facial expressions. I've sketched a rudimentary version of an idea that has received more elaborate development in a number of places. See (Gallagher 2008, Green 2010, Stout 2010, Krueger 2012, Krueger and Overgaard 2012).

I find the alternative metaphysics of mental states just sketched implausible, but there is not enough space in this paper to examine it in detail. Here I will simply observe that it is a very controversial view and that is sufficient reason to explore more metaphysically conservative options for the epistemology of other minds. I sketch such an avenue of exploration in the next section.

6. A Weakened Epistemological Thesis

I just mentioned the view that mental states are wholes that we are aware of in virtue of being aware of their bodily parts. I deny that mental states have bodily parts. And I deny that we

stand in sensory awareness relations to them. The view that I prefer is that mental states are parts that we know to exist because we are aware of wholes to which they belong. Compare the dog's middle: you do not see it, but you know it is there because you see the whole dog--by virtue of seeing enough of its other parts. Similarly, consider a brick wall seen from a distance: you do not see the individual bricks, but you do know they exist because you see the whole wall to which they belong. What is the analog of the wall in the mental states case? The obvious answer is that it is their bodily manifestations.

Distinguish three things:

A. Mental states -- e.g. surprise, seeing a dolphin, intending to grab the camera
B. Bodily states -- e.g. facial expression, gaze, motion
C. Bodily manifestations of mental states -- e.g. facial expression of surprise, gaze toward seen dolphin, motion carrying out intention to grab the camera

The view I want to defend has metaphysical, phenomenological, and epistemological commitments.

The metaphysical commitment is that in addition to mental states and bodily states there are bodily manifestations of mental states. These are psycho-physical wholes.

The phenomenological commitments are that (i) our sensory perceptual experiences represent mental states, bodily states, and bodily manifestations of mental states, (ii) our sensory perceptual experience do not, and do not seem to, make us stand in awareness relations to mental states, and (iii) our sensory perceptual states do, and seem to, make us stand in awareness relations to both bodily states and bodily manifestations of mental states.

This is an example of seeing a whole by seeing a part. The whole is not the mental state however. Rather the whole is a bodily manifestation of a mental state.

The epistemological commitments are that (i) our sensory perceptual experiences immediately justify beliefs about bodily states and bodily manifestations of mental states and (ii) our sensory perceptual experiences mediately justify beliefs about mental states. The idea is that we know about others' mental state mediately on the basis of immediate knowledge of their bodily manifestations of mental states.

So I propose replacing the Epistemological Thesis with the following:

> Weakened Epistemological Thesis: If one has a sensory perceptual experience as of another person being in a certain mental state, then it prima facie *mediately* justifies believing that person is in that mental state.

One might wonder why this view does not raise the problem of other minds all over again. The traditional problem of other minds focused on inference: if all we observe are bodily states, then what is the ground of our inference to mental states? I deny that we make an inference. We simply take our sensory perceptual experiences at face value. But one might worry that there is a new problem focused on mediacy: if sensory perceptual experiences only mediately justify beliefs about bodily states, then what is the ground of the mediate justification we have for beliefs about mental states? This is a legitimate question, but I think that it has a simple answer.

Our sensory perceptual experience do not only immediately justify beliefs about bodily states. They also immediately justify beliefs about bodily manifestations of mental states. On the view I am suggesting our sensory perceptual experiences immediately justify beliefs of the following sort: that is a facial expression of surprise, that is a gaze toward a seen dolphin, that is

a motion carrying out an intention to grab the camera. A facial expression of surprise implies surprise; a gaze toward a seen dolphin implies seeing a dolphin; a motion carrying out an intention to grab the camera implies an intention to grab the camera. So if a sensory perceptual experience immediately justifies you in believing that someone is making a facial expression of surprise, then it mediately justifies you in believing that that person is surprised and does so because the one implies the other. Similarly, if a sensory perceptual experience immediately justifies you in believing that someone is gazing toward a seen dolphin, then it mediately justifies you in believing that that person sees a dolphin and does so because the one implies the other. And if a sensory perceptual experience immediately justifies you in believing that someone is moving to carry out an intention to grab the camera, then it mediately justifies you in believing that that person intends to grab the camera and does so because the one implies the other.

The traditional problem of other minds arose because of the assumption that sensory perception only reveals something that falls short of mental states--mere bodily states. Perceptual theorists aim to undercut the problem by extending the reach of perception. But it is a mistake to think it extends just to the mental states themselves: these are not objects of sensory awareness. Rather, it extends to something that includes mental states as parts. It extends to bodily manifestations of mental states. This view both avoids the problem of other minds and avoids attributing implausible capacities for sensory awareness.

One might worry that in order to acquire the capacity to see bodily manifestations of mental states one must learn substantive bridge principles connecting bodily cues to the mental states they cue. Aside from from worries about how such beliefs could be justified, this result would be a problem because the bodily cues are often subtle: we often lack beliefs, justified or

unjustified, in bridge principles connecting bodily cues to the mental states they cue. But this is a common phenomenon.

Consider depth perception. Things look to be different distances. When we see things as being a certain distance our visual experience does not basically represent that they are a certain distance. It represents that they are a certain distance in virtue of representing other features--depth cues. One example is motion parallax: as one moves the further something is the more stationary it appears. Another example is aerial perspective: things that are further away have lower luminance contrast and lower color saturation. A third example is texture gradience: the textures of closer things are more clearly visible. For many people these cues are subtle: even though their experiences represent distances in virtue of representing depth cues they do not have beliefs in bridge principles connecting depth cues to the distances they cue.

It is crucial to distinguish cued content from non-presented content, i.e. content that fails to meet the Presentational Constraint. It is one thing for an experience to represent that p in virtue of representing that q. It is another thing for an experience to represent that p without making it seem as if it makes one aware of a truth-maker for p. Say you are driving and your visual experience represents that some mountains are further away than some trees in virtue of representing that the mountains are more stationary than the trees. This is compatible with your visual experience making it seem as if it makes you aware of a truth-maker for the proposition that the mountains are further away than the trees: the distance seems to be seen.

I have given independent reasons to think that sensory perceptual contents attributing mental states to others are non-presented. The arguments do not extend to bodily manifestations of mental states. Like contents representing distances, these contents, or at least some of them, are both cued and presented. So there is no reason to worry that the

Weakened Epistemological Thesis will raise the problem of other minds all over again. It is a metaphysically conservative and epistemologically satisfying resting place.

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