Perception, Introspection and Functional Consonance

by

JOHN DILWORTH

Western Michigan University

[*Theoria* 2006.4: 299-318.]

Abstract What is the relation between a perceptual experience of an object X as being red, and one's belief, if any, as to the nature of that experience? A traditional Cartesian view would be that, if indeed object X does seem to be red to oneself, then one's resulting introspective belief about it could only be a *conforming* belief, i.e., a belief that X perceptually seems to be *red* to oneself--rather than, for instance, a belief that X perceptually seems to be green to oneself instead. I offer some non-Cartesian, functionalist reasons supporting such an introspective certainty view, based on a concept of *logical consonance* of perceptual dispositions, according to which both experience-based and belief dispositions cannot diverge in their content, on pain of their having *inconsistent manifestations* in relevant situations, such as color-sorting tasks. In addition, other views of introspection are criticized from the perspective of this consonance view.

What is the relation between a perceptual experience of an object X as being red, and one's belief, if any, as to the nature of that experience? A traditional Cartesian view would be that, if indeed object X does seem to be red to oneself, then one's resulting introspective belief about it could only be a *conforming* belief, i.e., a belief that X perceptually seems to be *red* to oneself--rather than, for instance, a belief that X perceptually seems to be green to oneself instead. On such a Cartesian view, our introspective certainly about our own thoughts extends also to our perceptual experiences as to how things seem to be to us, so that our resulting introspective beliefs about our phenomenal states also count as knowledge of them.

On the other hand, more naturalistic approaches to perception tend to explain such correlations, if indeed they hold, without any appeal to introspective certainty. One

possible approach is to argue, with Burge, Davidson and Heil, that such a belief conforms to the corresponding perceptual experience because each is causally produced by the same external object X.[1] A more specific version of this strategy involves an 'inclusion' view, according to which the relevant perceptual state is itself somehow included in the belief state, so that for that reason also they cannot diverge.[2]

However, critics of traditional 'inner sense' views of introspection, such as Dretske and Shoemaker, provide arguments that to my mind undermine such inclusion views, depending as they do on the assumption that the belief is directly about the perceptual experience itself rather than about the object causing the experience.[3] Thus, to be explicit, for the rest of this paper I shall adopt the Dretske/Shoemaker view that the relevant perceptual beliefs are about the object causing the perception, rather than directly about the perceptual experience itself. Also, the 'common cause' argument by itself is too weak, in that, since beliefs and perceptual experiences presumably are distinct cognitive events or states on non-inclusion views, other differential causal factors could intervene to cause beliefs *not* to conform to perceptual experiences in some cases. A mere claim that beliefs normally, *ceteris paribus,* conform to perceptual experience is of no epistemic interest, in that it would amount neither to a kind of introspective incorrigibility, nor to a kind of privileged access by the perceiver to her perceptual states.

However, there is another, broadly functionalist approach to the issue which seems not to have previously been investigated by others, involving a logical concept of *consonance*.[4] According to this functional consonance approach, the *subsequent* or downstream causal functionality of perceptual concepts is at least as important as their prior or upstream causal relations. If perception of an object X is regarded as either

involving, or at least being closely associated with, appropriate dispositions related to X, then a much stronger argument can be developed as to why a perceptually derived belief about a worldly object must conform to a perceptual experience, as follows. This argument will provide a distinctively functionalist, non-Cartesian kind of introspective certainty.

The basic idea is that a perceptual experience, such as that of an object X looking red, either involves, or would give rise to, appropriate dispositions with respect to that object, such as that of a disposition D(E) to put the object with other red-looking objects in a color-sorting task. But at the same time, the perceptual acquisition of a belief about how the color appears to oneself would similarly give rise to a related disposition D(B), which would also have some appropriate manifestation in the same color-sorting task as previously.[5]

My claim is that the experience-based disposition D(E) and the belief-based disposition D(B) must be *logically consonant* in such a situation, in the sense that, insofar as each is activated in the same situation, each much manifest the *same* behavior by the perceiver. Thus the fundamental reason as to why an object cannot look red, but be believed to look green, is that such a state of affairs would require a person to have *logically inconsistent* dispositions--such as a disposition both to put the object X with the red objects, and also *not* to do so, but instead to e.g. put it with the green objects.

A person logically cannot simultaneously have inconsistent dispositions with respect to a given dispositional activation situation, and hence whatever dispositions the person does have with respect to such a situation must be *logically consonant* with each other, that is, have the same manifestations in any given situation where both have

manifestations. But on a broadly functional view of perception, both perceptual experiences and corresponding perceptually derived beliefs either involve, or are closely associated with, such relevant dispositions. Hence the perceptual experiences and beliefs must also be logically consonant with each other. Thus the reason as to why, if object X seems to be red to oneself, then one must also believe that it looks red to oneself--if one has any belief at all about the relevant perceptual experience--is because the legitimate functional status of each of those states as a genuinely perceptual state depends on each having logically compatible or consonant relations to some common potential behavioral manifestation situation (in the broadest functional sense, that is, including manifestations of related cognitive events such as thinking or deliberating.)

But at the same time, prior causal relations also have a role to play in the functional analysis, in that they are required as necessary conditions of the *genuineness* of each corresponding perceptual state. For instance, if someone took a drug that caused him to have a complex hallucination concerning an apparent but actually non-existent object X in front of him, which appeared to be red but which he believed to be green, this would not be a counter-example to the above functional consonance analysis, because the drug-taking cannot provide a genuine, worldly-object-caused *perceptual* belief, about which issues of functional consonance could be raised, since such a belief is purely drug-caused rather than at least partly caused by some actual object X.

Thus, to sum up so far, the functional consonance analysis potentially provides a powerful new kind of explanation as to why a belief must *necessarily* be consonant--on grounds of logical rather than causal necessity--with a corresponding perceptual experience. The rest of this paper will clarify this logical concept of functional

consonance, and explore how it relates to more traditional views about the epistemic authority and privilege of introspective beliefs about one's own perceptual states.

1. More on Functional Consonance

As a preliminary, the functional consonance view will be spelled out in more detail. If D(E) is an experiential or phenomenal disposition associated with its seeming to the perceiver that an object X looks red, and if D(B) is a corresponding belief disposition concerning the color of X, then any color content of D(B), other than a belief that it looks red, would have some X-related behavioral manifestation, in at least one of the mutually relevant activation conditions C of the two dispositions, which would logically conflict with some required manifestation of the experiential red-seeming disposition D(E). Or in other words, dispositions D(E) and D(B) logically cannot simultaneously co-exist in Z's current perceptual state if there is even *one* mutual activation-condition C that would require inconsistent manifestations of the two dispositions. Hence the simultaneous co-existence in Z of both phenomenal dispositions D1 and belief dispositions D2 requires *complete* uniformity of manifestations M in *all* of their mutual activation-conditions C.

Here, I would claim, in a nutshell, is the source of the apparent introspective certainty of beliefs 'about' one's phenomenal perceptual qualities being in complete conformity with those phenomenal qualities--there is a kind of '*post-established harmony*' or *consonance* between the phenomenal qualities and the belief, because of the requirements on the potential *subsequent* manifestations of their associated dispositions, which

logically force the different kinds of dispositions to remain in lockstep with each other as a condition of their very existence as concurrent dispositions in the same person, no matter what changes might occur in an external perceived object or property X.

Another distinction that should be made is between the world-relative, causally contingent aspects of a causal disposition D, and the above-mentioned logical incompatibility factors. It is presumably a contingent fact about the causal laws of this world as to what activation conditions C would produce what manifestations M of a given disposition D. But in any possible world, an inconsistent disposition ~D may be defined with respect to D, such that under the same activation conditions C in that world, disposition ~D would be manifested as ~M rather than M, such that it is logically impossible that both M and ~M could be simultaneously manifested by the same person under those conditions C.

Or, otherwise put, though it is only *causally* necessary, in a world-relative way, that person Z produce manifestation M of her disposition D under conditions C, it is *logically* necessary that if she does so, she cannot also simultaneously possess a logically conflicting disposition ~D, that would require her to produce manifestation ~M, rather than M, under those same conditions C in that world. Thus as a result, consonance relations are *logically necessary*, both in the sense that their holding in any given world is logically required, on pain of inconsistency in that world, and also in that they would hold in all possible worlds, in spite of any contingent causal variations in manifestation conditions of dispositions through different worlds.

2. Dispositions, Consonance and Conflicting Epistemic Tendencies

Before proceeding, it will be useful to further clarify the logical and psychological foundations of the claims being made with respect to perception and functional consonance. As for consonance itself, I would argue that nothing more is involved here than the basic logic of causal dispositions within an explanatory framework. An organism Z has a disposition D--more specifically identified as a *categorical* disposition below--just in case, under conditions C, Z will do M, with the claim that a disposition D is involved being a claim that D is, in some way, *causally or explanatorily relevant* to Z's doing M under those conditions C--for example, in a perceptual case, that Z would not do M in conditions C unless it had perceptually acquired a disposition to do so.

The basic point about consonance, detached from its perceptual functionalist framework as a concept of perceptual functional consonance, is simply that if an organism Z has more than one disposition Di that would be manifested under conditions C, each of those dispositions D1, D2...Di must have *the same* manifestation M, because an organism cannot simultaneously carry out logically inconsistent behaviors. That simple point concerns what could be called *categorical* dispositions D, which should be distinguished from *probabilistic* dispositions PD, which are such that an organism Z having PD has a *tendency* or *probability* of manifesting behavior M in conditions C, with a probability P. As one would expect, an organism Z having probabilistic disposition PD need not always manifest behavior M under conditions C, but nevertheless it must, over a

sufficiently large number of test cases, actually manifest behavior M in a frequency which asymptotically converges on percentage P of those cases.

Then a related concept of *probabilistic consonance* may be defined for jointly held probabilistic dispositions PD1 and PD2 by organism Z, such that the probability, for each disposition PD1 and PD2, of Z producing behavior M under conditions C must converge on the *same* probability value P for each disposition. The reason is obvious: if a necessary condition of Z possessing disposition DP1 is that it manifest behavior M with a probability of .8--in 80% of cases--in conditions C, then it cannot also simultaneously manifest a *different* percentage of cases manifesting behavior M in conditions C in virtue of another disposition PD2 that it also possesses. Thus the probabilistic consonance of probabilistic dispositions is equally entailed by the logical impossibility of an organism Z simultaneously producing behaviors M and not-M in any particular case, except that, because a probability is involved, no particular cases are specified which would have to thus conflict, out of the full range of test cases, in order for the probabilities of dispositions PD1 and PD2, with respect to the manifesting of behavior M under conditions C, to differ.

Though the issue cannot be further investigated here, arguably probabilistic perceptual functional consonance cases of experiences versus beliefs would be at least closely analogous to categorical cases, in that, because of the consonance-linked manifestation percentages of each, they would be epistemically reliable or unreliable in closely parallel ways. Also, of course they must remain completely in lockstep in individual cases, since a given behavioral episode either is a manifestation of behavior M1, or of some distinct alternative behavior M2, and in either case both dispositions PD1 and PD2 must be

manifesting exactly the same behavior in those same conditions C. Thus, perhaps unexpectedly, even probabilistic simultaneous dispositions of relatively low probability cannot diverge at all in their overlapping behavioral manifestations, though the point is an obvious one once its logical basis is grasped. Hence, to summarize so far, any simultaneous dispositions possessed by an organism Z, whether categorical or probabilistic, that have non-disjoint manifestation conditions must be *logically consonant*, in that they must involve complete uniformity of manifestations M1, M2, ...Mi in all cases of those non-disjoint manifestation conditions C.

Turning now to more epistemic, cognitive and psychological issues, we move, to put the issue metaphorically, from the hardness of the logical 'must' of causally based dispositional consonance to the fragility, or even evanescence, of various dispositional structures in the face of warring, broadly epistemic cognitive tendencies or factors. One primary opposition is between temporary or immediately acquired perceptual dispositions versus often opposed, longer-term and typically non-perceptual dispositions. For example, the well-known Muller-Lyer illusion, in which two vertical lines enclosed in arrowheads, '<--->' and '>---<' seem to be of different lengths, is usually described as a case that would prima facie seem to be a counter-example to the present consonance account of perceptual experience versus belief, in that, even though the lines are experienced as being of different lengths, knowledgeable perceivers tend to believe that the lines nevertheless are the same length.

However, the relevant knowledge that the lines are actually the same length is clearly not a belief that is *perceptually* acquired via direct perceptual inspection of the lines at all, since typically it requires careful measurement of the lines to convince people that

they are indeed the same length. Also, the lines continue to look different lengths even after measurement has shown their sameness, so if one were to ignore one's measurement-based knowledge about such cases, one would continue to perceptually acquire a belief that they are of different lengths via visual inspection of them, that would be consonant with the lines perceptually seeming to be of different lengths.

Or in other words, what we have in such cases is not a conflict of perceptual dispositions--which has already been shown to be, strictly speaking, impossible--but instead a refusal by a perceiver to believe what she would otherwise believe on 'the evidence of her own eyes', so that the temporary or initial perceptually acquired consonant belief that the lines are of different lengths is rejected in favor of a longer-term belief based on prior knowledge. In such cases, what is involved is not, strictly speaking, a clash of short-term versus long-term dispositions associated with the relevant beliefs, because I have argued that dispositions as such cannot clash at all. Instead, what is actually involved is basically a clash or conflict in *epistemic reasons or justifications* for *adopting or retaining* the relevant dispositions. Thus, as an overview of the relevant required cognitive structure, minimally we need a two tier view of the mind, in which lower level, purely executive causal dispositional structures implement higher level, broadly epistemic decisions, which decisions can change the actual causal/dispositional structure of the lower level.

On such a view, perceptual episodes also can change the dispositional structure of the lower level, since it is generally accepted that perception can provide action-related epistemic reasons. Hence, in the case of the Muller-Lyer illusion, an epistemically measurement-based prior, ongoing disposition to regard two lines as being the same

length is *temporarily changed* by perception of the illusion, to a pair of new consonant dispositions to perceive the lines as seeming to be of different lengths, and as being currently believed to be of different lengths. But this temporary lower level consonant belief disposition is vulnerable to being displaced or replaced by the previous ongoing belief disposition, given knowledge that a perceptual illusion was involved in the perception. Also, this return to a previous ongoing belief disposition would necessarily also involve a *discounting of the veridicality* of the seeming perceptual difference in length of the lines, in that the dispositions associated with it must necessarily also be rejected or causally extinguished upon the re-adoption of the longer-term belief dispositions concerning the sameness in length of the lines, which could not be consonant with those perceptual seemings.

Parenthetically, this theoretical way of understanding apparent dispositional conflicts as actually involving higher level epistemic or reason-based conflicts, whose resolution involves lower level dispositional switchings or replacements, arguably is cognitively realistic generally. For example, people often act impulsively or emotionally in ways that go against their long-term rational beliefs. A broadly dispositional account of action is thus forced to acknowledge that in such cases their longer term dispositions must somehow have become inoperative or temporarily overridden, since, as argued above, the idea of dispositional conflicts as such is causally and logically confused. Hence it is necessary to move at least to a two tier mode of explanation of such cases, as has been done here.

Nevertheless, there may be other apparent cases of conflicting dispositions primarily involving nothing more than differing relevant manifestation conditions. Dispositions

acquired through direct perceptual acquaintance with an item X in a store might dispose one to buy it, even though reading a description of the same item X online might dispose one not to buy it. But there is no dispositional conflict here, because distinct dispositions manifested in distinct conditions are involved in such cases. To be sure, there may be potential conflicts in the rationality of one's goals associated with such apparent inconsistencies in one's conduct with respect to the same item X, but again, these are not specifically *dispositional* conflicts or inconsistencies. Dispositional descriptions are about low level causal structures and their specific manifestation conditions, not about higher level deliberative or emotional factors that may have produced or influenced those causal structures.

3. Trouble for Traditional Views of Introspection: the Functional Separability of Experience and Belief

The potential value of a consonance approach to issues of introspection can be further reinforced by the following considerations. The literature on introspection has not yet adequately taken account of developments in other areas of the philosophy of mind, in particular on issues of non-conceptual content in perception.[6] There is much evidence that at least some perceptual content is non-conceptual, such as experiences of many different, particular shades of color in a complicated color chart, for which it is implausible to suppose that perceivers have a concept for each perceived shade.[7] But if this is so, there cannot be any straightforward correspondence, at least in such cases,

between a perceptual experience of a given shade F and a conceptualized belief concerning that shade.

More generally, there is plenty of evidence that perceptual experiences play *different functional roles* in a cognitive system from those of corresponding beliefs about them. Experiences are associated with fine discriminations and pictorial or analog modeling of objects and properties, whereas beliefs are associated with categorization and abstract reasoning about those same objects and properties.[8] Hence traditional 'inner sense' views of perceptual introspection become even more dubious for those reasons, since such views rely on the content of a belief about an experience being exactly the same as that of the experience itself, whereas the functional role differentiation of experiences versus beliefs will often make this impossible.[9]

Such functional differences would presumably also infect the *prior* causation of perceptual experiences and beliefs. For example, an experience of a shade of red is presumably caused by whatever is the physical basis for that particular shade, whereas a corresponding belief that the relevant object is red may instead be caused only by more generic physical properties of the object, that determine that it is one of the reds rather than one of the greens, but without determining which particular shade of red it is. This point also throws more doubt on the Burge-Davidson-Heil view discussed previously,[10] that such a belief conforms to the corresponding perceptual experience because each is causally produced by the same external object X. But if the relevant causally effective properties are distinct in each case, such a view loses most of its force. Also, it seems likely that evolutionary factors would have differentially affected the experiential versus belief-related cognitive structures of organisms, so that there would be significant degrees

of causal independence, both in the prior causative factors affecting experiences versus beliefs as discussed above, and in their differing causal reactions to those causative factors.

However, these significant structural differences do not adversely affect a functional consonance view, which can happily accept that the perceptual causal streams involved in experiences versus corresponding beliefs are distinct parallel streams, independent from each other, with distinct causes and differing effects, as well as each having a distinctive functional role in cognition. For consonance as such requires only a *logical consistency* in the manifestations of whatever dispositions are involved in, or associated with, those parallel streams of experiences and corresponding beliefs.

4. Introspection and Evidence

As already noted, a functional consonance view of perceptual introspection involves a rejection of traditional 'inner sense' views of introspection, that is, of perceptual models according to which introspecting a perceptual experience is a kind of inner perception of that experience itself. As a preliminary, here is a brief rationale for rejecting such 'inner perception' models of introspection from a functionalist perspective.[11]

On a functionalist view, what makes an experience a perceptual one is that it integrally involves *taking* some external object or event X to be some specific way F based on data provided by one's sense organs, which taking is itself a judgment or attitude toward X involving appropriate X or F-related dispositions, that would, under appropriate

circumstances, involve cognitive activities such as categorizing X as F, believing X to be F, deliberating about what to do about X being F, and a readiness to behave toward X in some appropriate F-related ways. Or in other words, functionalists are committed to denying that what makes a particular cognitive event a perceptual experience can be defined purely in terms of the intrinsic properties of that event. But then it follows that introspective knowledge of the perceptual content of that event cannot itself be any kind of perception of that event and its intrinsic properties, since the relevant *functionalist* content of the event is relational rather than intrinsic, and hence it is not available for any such kind of internal perceptual introspection.[12]

But the Cartesian temptations of such an 'inner perception' view remain. It seems indubitable in some sense that an object X can look red to oneself, or seem to be red, so that one has an experience of X *seeming* to be red, whether or not it in fact is red. But if one cannot doubt that, at least on this occasion, X *seems* to be red to you, then surely one now has introspective certainty, or knowledge, about this perceptual event or state of affairs of X's now seeming to be red to you.

There are parallel epistemic temptations as well. Perceptually justifying a claim that some object X actually *is* red is notoriously difficult. But by contrast, the claim that X merely *seems* to be red to the perceiver is a much more modest claim, indeed one that it might seem harmless to view as indubitable or knowledge-providing when claimed by the perceiver about her current perceptual experience.

The challenge for a functionalist is to provide some functional equivalent for what--if anything--is experientially or epistemically correct in such broadly Cartesian views about perception, while at the same time abandoning the 'inner perception' model assumed or

presupposed by them. This the functional consonance view can do in the manner previously suggested in broad outlines, which will now be explained in more detail.

To begin, on the functional consonance view, a perceptual experience of X seeming to be F, and a perceptually derived belief that X seems to be F, are viewed as each involving different clusters of the functional properties of the relevant perceptual event. In dispositional terms, claims about the experiential aspects of the perceptual event of X seeming to be F are to be explained in terms of acquisition or activation of the analog modeling or representational dispositions involved in the event, while claims about the relevant belief are instead to be explained in terms of concurrent and parallel belief dispositions, involving categorization of X in F-related terms, whose formation or activation are also involved in the same perceptual event.

Thus perceptual episodes involve at least two parallel streams of experiential versus belief-related dispositional changes,[13] which do not causally interact with each other, but which have common or overlapping causes, namely the relevant properties of object X, e.g. its generic and specific color properties. In addition, the clusters of dispositions involved in those parallel streams also must have *functionally consonant* effects, as previously explained, in that the same person, for purely logical reasons, cannot simultaneously possess two dispositions that would logically conflict under any possible manifestation conditions for the relevant dispositions.

As a first approximation only, here is an initial consonance-based replacement for the Cartesian view that one knows by introspection that an object X currently perceptually seems red to oneself. What one instead knows by non-Cartesian, functional introspection is that the perceptually derived belief one is currently having concerning the

redness of X must be *consonant with* the perceptual experience one is also currently having concerning the redness of X.

With this initial replacement in hand, the consonance theorist can argue as follows. The epistemic value of knowledge claims with respect to how things perceptually *seem* to be with respect to a supposed property F of an object X is entirely exhausted by their putative evidential value with respect to how things *actually are* with respect to the Fness or otherwise of object X. Thus a Cartesian claim to knowledge, rather than mere opinion or guess, that object X seems to be red amounts to no more than a claim that the maximum possible putative epistemic evidential weight of X's seeming to be red can be realized by the perceiver, in virtue of her *knowing* that X does seem to her to be red. Or, otherwise put, the Cartesian claim is a claim to epistemic transparency or directness, i.e., a claim that the additional introspective step of belief about one's perception adding no further epistemic uncertainty to whatever uncertainty, if any, attaches to the perceptual experience of X itself.

But, the consonance theorist can continue, the situation is structurally parallel in some ways with respect to the *consonance* of perceptual experience and belief as well. To whatever degree or amount the perceptual experience itself provides evidence for the truth of the claim that object X *is* red, the consonance of experience and belief guarantees that the belief cannot involve any discordant or interfering element that might diminish the evidential value of the relevant experience. In addition, the consonance view is consistent with a claim that the belief itself may involve, not only consonant supporting evidence with respect to the experience, but also further complementary evidence of a

conceptual kind that could potentially increase the total evidentiary value of the combined experience and belief with respect to X's seeming redness.

Thus there is a sense in which the consonance theorist has an even more optimistic view of the evidentiary value of perceptual episodes than does the Cartesian theorist. This is so for two reasons. First, because on the consonance view the perceptual experience, in and of itself, has epistemic value because of its functional status, which ensures that the experiential information must be usable in epistemic investigations--as opposed to the Cartesian view, on which an experience as such has no epistemic status at all until it is known by an introspective act. And second, because the relevant consonant belief may provide further complementary information of a conceptual kind about the relevant perceived state of affairs, in addition to that provided by the perceptual experience itself.

5. Disanalogies with Cartesian Views

Some disanalogies between the consonance and Cartesian views of perceptual seemings should also be noted. To begin, the Cartesian view, as usually understood, involves at least six assumptions about presupposed or implied items of knowledge, each of which should be rejected by a functional consonance view.

Let us assume, as before, that the basic Cartesian view is that one knows by introspection that an object X currently perceptually seems red to oneself, and assume that the relevant person P is indeed having an experience of some kind. Thus in first

person terms, person P claims to know 'I am currently experiencing object X as perceptually seeming to be red'. Cartesians would tend to assume that the following six propositions must also be known by person P in such a situation:

1) I am currently having an experience

2) The experience I am currently having is a perceptual experience

3) It is the property redness that object X perceptually seems to have in my current perceptual experience

4) If I am having a perceptual experience of X seeming to be red, then I know that I am having a perceptual experience of X seeming to be red

5) If I am having a perceptual experience of X seeming to be red, then it must be possible for me to know that I am having a perceptual experience of X seeming to be red

6) If I have a perceptually derived belief that X currently seems red to me, then I am currently having a perceptual experience of X seeming to be red to me

By contrast, a functional consonance view should consistently reject all six of these knowledge claims, some for familiar reasons, and others for reasons peculiar to the consonance view of introspection. To begin with 4), the consonance theorist can reject it,

because on her view it is a contingent matter as to whether a given perceptual episode includes both experiential and belief-based clusters of dispositions. There might be experiential perceptual episodes in which no corresponding belief-related dispositions are formed or activated. But in such cases, there would be no current beliefs that necessarily must be consonant with the corresponding perceptual experience, and hence no consonance-based equivalent for Cartesian proposition 4) is constructible.

A similar but stronger point applies to proposition 5). Not only might there be experiential perceptual episodes for which no corresponding belief-related dispositions are formed or activated, but because of the causal independence of experience and belief-formation, it might be *causally impossible* in a given case for any belief-related dispositions to be formed that correspond to a given experience. Hence proposition 5) could be false as well as 4). This rejection of 5) is probably the most radical way in which a consonance view rejects Cartesianism about perceptual episodes.

Perhaps surprisingly, the failures of 4) and 5) also imply that proposition 1), that, in effect, if one is actually having an experience then one knows that one is, must also be rejected. For, as in the case of 4), one cannot know it without having a consonance-justified true belief to that effect--but there may simply fail to be any such belief that one has, that consonance could elevate to the status of knowledge.

As for the remaining propositions 2), 3) and 6), all of them could be false for familiar reasons. In the case of 2), the failure of experiences to be self-verifying as genuinely perceptual experiences is obvious from perceptual hallucination cases which seem, but are not, genuinely perceptual. 3) fails for several reasons, including familiar externalist reasons for the dependence of content on external factors, plus issues such as the

possibility that there is no genuine property of redness for X to seem to have. And finally, 6) can fail because of the possibility of blindsight,[14] where there is clear evidence of belief-like perceptual intake in the absence of any perceptual experience. In addition, blindsight cases do provide some direct support for the consonance view, in that they provide a class of examples in which the claimed independence of perceptually derived beliefs from perceptual experiences is actually demonstrable.

6. Perceptual Consonance Principles

In light of our consideration of propositions 1) through 5) in the previous section, a more explicit version of the consonance claim concerning knowledge of perceptual experiences may be stated as follows. The initial version was that: what one knows by non-Cartesian functional introspection is that the perceptually derived belief one is currently having concerning the Fness of X must be *consonant with* the perceptual experience one is also currently having concerning the Fness of X. The more explicit version is: If one is having at time t a perceptual experience concerning the Fness of X, and if at that same time t one is also having a perceptually derived belief concerning the Fness of X, then the experience and the belief must be consonant with each other.

This way of formulating the *principle of perceptual consonance*, as it could be called, uses the generic phrase 'concerning the Fness of X' to allow for the specific differences in ways experiences versus beliefs may concern Fness, for any property F. Thus what the

principle says, in effect, is that experience/belief pairs, which will in fact always concern the same property of Fness, must necessarily do so for functional consonance reasons.

But a broader form of the principle is also useful, which may be given after the following preliminary point. In the just-given narrower form of the principle, there was no generality lost in only considering experience/belief pairs both of which concern Fness, because there are no genuine pairs involving both Fness and non-Fness--other than irrelevant 'mixed' cases in which several properties are simultaneously perceived, each of which would require its own separate experience versus belief consonance analysis.

However, so as to avoid the complications of such mixed cases, one may distinguish determinable versus determinate forms of a property, such as the determinable color versus the determinate redness. Now arguably mixed cases of simultaneous perception of different properties would always be cases involving properties falling under different determinables, since one could not simultaneously perceive an object both to have determinate color F1 and also to have a distinct determinate color F2, whereas there is no logical objection to simultaneous perception of e.g. a specific color and a specific shape of an object, since the relevant determinate properties fall under distinct determinables.

A broader principle of perceptual consonance may then be formulated as follows, concerning a person P. If person P is having at time t a perceptual experience concerning the F1ness of X, which F1ness is a determinate form of determinable property F, and if at that same time P is also having a perceptually derived belief concerning *some* determinate value Fi of that same determinable propery F, then a) the experience and the belief will both concern the same determinate value F1 of that determinable F; and b), condition a) not only is true, but also must necessarily be true for logical consonance

reasons. Thus consonance provides a logically sufficient condition for the non-divergence of some experienced and believed determinate property application F1 of a determinable property F to an object X.

7. Consonance and Privileged Access

It has been shown that consonance considerations underwrite a form of introspective knowledge or certainty as to one's current perceptual experience of an object X seeming to have property F1 falling under a determinable kind of property F, to the extent that, insofar as one also currently has some perceptually acquired belief concerning some property Fi falling under that same determinable, Fi must be the same determinate property as the experienced property F1.

However, at the same time consonance considerations also lead to a radical rejection of several traditional versions of privileged access theses for perceptual episodes of persons.[15] To begin, as pointed out in section 5, not only might a person fail to have a belief corresponding to a given perceptual experience, but also it might even be *causally impossible* for her to have the corresponding belief in a particular case. In such cases other persons may be able to have true beliefs about person P's perceptual episodes which are causally inaccessible to P herself, so that P does not even have any equivalent access, let alone privileged access, to such beliefs.

Also, more generally, since consonance considerations are based on the logical impossibility of a single person P simultaneously having non-consonant dispositions,

anyone knows as a matter of logic that any experience-belief pairs of a given person P concerning a given perceptual episode *must* be consonant, so consonance-related knowledge as such is not only *not* privileged, it also is an a priori kind of knowledge, requiring no substantive epistemic access to individual perceptual episodes by anyone, including person P herself. Thus the epistemic certainty made possible by consonance considerations has nothing to do with the putative Cartesian certainty of immediately introspected clear and distinct ideas--though, to be sure, the idea of consonance itself is a paradigm case of a functionalist variety of a clear and distinct idea that is logically certain.

Nevertheless, it may be useful to briefly situate these radical failures of consonance-based considerations to underwrite any forms of privileged access in their broader functionalist context, which can lend support to at least one weak variety of complexity-based privileged access. To begin, third-person investigations of a person's dispositions have to cope with their functional holism--a given disposition is what it is only relative to some relevant set of functional structures of the person that implements it. Thus, given the extreme complexity of the neurological events underlying a given perceptual episode, plus the even greater complexity of the functional connections of those events with potential future cognitive and behavioral events in that person's history, any third person scientific investigation of a person's dispositions in any significant detail is likely to be unpromising, to say the least.

Now it might be thought that such complexity problems could be avoided if some automatic process were available to make an exact functional duplicate Q of a person P, which could then be studied independently of P. However, such a duplicate would of

course be just as complex as P herself, and hence just as holistically intractable for purposes of scientific study. Also, any more limited interactions with Q would alter Q's dispositions in unpredictable ways, hence also destroying the required parallelism with the original person P.

Thus, in conclusion, though person P's own access to her perceptual episodes and dispositions may lack various traditional Cartesian attributes, as detailed here and in section 5, the prospects for any fully detailed third-person access to them are hopeless indeed. Of course we can study visual mechanisms etc. as such, but the specific functional uses made of those mechanisms by a perceiver, including the finer details of her cognitive and perceptual skills and know-how with respect to them, will inevitably remain mainly inaccessible to science, which can at best hope for broad generalizations concerning them, that only roughly apply both to the relevant individual, and to people in general. Hence, in spite of the fact that consonance considerations alone provide no support for any claims of privileged first person access, the fact of our functional complexity still provides support for our traditional intuitions concerning the comparative inadequacy of third person kinds of access to a person's perceptual states.[16]

Bibliography

Burge, Tyler: 1988, “Individualism and Self-Knowledge,” *Journal of Philosophy* 85: 649-63.

Davidson, Donald: 1988, "Reply to Burge," Journal of Philosophy 85: 664-665.

Dilworth, J. 2004: "Naturalized Perception Without Information," *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* 25 no. 4, 349-368.

Dilworth, J. 2005a: "The Reflexive Theory of Perception," *Behavior and Philosophy 33*: 17-40.

Dilworth, J. 2005b: "A Naturalistic, Reflexive Dispositional Approach to Perception," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43 no. 4: 583-601.

Dilworth, J. 2005c: "Perceptual Causality Problems Reflexively Resolved," *Acta Analytica* 20 no. 3: 11-31.

Dretske, Fred.: 1995, *Naturalizing the Mind*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gertler, Brie: 2001, "Introspecting Phenomenal States," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63: 305-328.

Gertler, Brie: 2002, " The Mechanics of Self-Knowledge," *Philosophical Topics* 28:125-46.

Gertler, Brie (ed.): 2003, *Privileged Access, Philosophical Accounts of Self-Knowledge*, London: Ashgate.

Gunther, York H. (ed.): 2003, *Essays on Nonconceptual Content*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Heil, John: 1988, "Privileged Access," *Mind* 97: 238-51.

Shoemaker, Sydney: 1996, *The First-Person Perspective and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tye, Michael: 2002, *Consciousness, Color and Content*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Vision, Gerald: 1998, "Blindsight and Philosophy," Philosophical Psychology 11: 137-159.

Notes

[1] E.g., Burge 1988, Davidson 1988, Heil 1988.

[2] E.g., Burge 1988, Gertler 2001 and 2002.

[3] E.g., Dretske 1995, Shoemaker 1996.

[4] For an introduction to the approach see my paper "The Functional Consonance of Perceptual Introspection," under consideration.

[5] For a recent functionalist perceptual theory compatible with this account see my papers 2004, 2005a, 2005b, and 2005c.

[6] For instance, Shoemaker only has a single later footnote in his Royce lectures mentioning this possibility: Shoemaker 1996, p. 207.

[7] E.g., see Tye 2002, Gunther 2003.

[8] Tye 2002 and Gunther 2003.

[9] Which is not to deny that there may be other legitimate functional roles for higher order intentional states or thoughts, independent of their traditional perceptual introspection uses.

[10] See fn. 1.

[11] The rationale can be brief, because Shoemaker 1995 has already provided much more detailed reasons, also from a broadly functionalist perspective, as to why such views are inadequate for introspective views in general.

[12] A referee suggested that this argument is not completely conclusive, in that higher order states might be sensitive in some way to the relational causal potential of a relevant first order state. But philosophical naturalists may legitimately ask for more concrete details before accepting this as a substantive explanatory possibility.

[13] Presumably there is also an unconscious stream, a legacy of our evolutionary heritage that includes much simpler organisms whose perceptual structures involve neither conceptualization nor consciousness.

[14] See, e.g., Vision 1998.

[15] For some comprehensive recent discussions see Gertler 2003.

[16] My thanks to two anonymous referees for very helpful and supportive comments.