

Responsibility and Perception^{1,2}

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On June 2nd, 2010, Armando Galarraga nearly became the twenty-first pitcher in Major League Baseball history to pitch a perfect game—one in which no opposing batter reaches base. The feat is rare; only twenty-three of approximately 218,000 MLB games have been perfect games. On what would have been Galarraga's final pitch, Jason Donald hit a ground ball that first baseman Miguel Cabrera ran to retrieve. Galarraga raced to first base to catch Cabrera's throw and force Donald out. Umpire Jim Joyce ruled Donald safe, ending the perfect game. But that ruling was incorrect. Video clearly shows that Galarraga caught the ball and touched the base before Donald. After the game, Joyce immediately apologized.

All agree that Joyce's ruling was incorrect. But those familiar with sports fans will recognize additional language that is used in such cases: Joyce was 'blind,' an 'idiot,' and so on. The implication is that Joyce was not only wrong but irrational, irresponsible, or unjustified in his ruling. That assessment is not unwarranted. In what is called a 'force play,' Galarraga tried to catch the ball and touch the base before Donald. When very close, it is difficult to tell who touched the base

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first or whether the fielding player caught the ball in time. But this case was not particularly close; Galarraga caught the ball and touched the base while Donald was a full stride away. This should have been an easy call for an umpire with Joyce's experience. Umpires are taught a simple rule for perceiving force plays: they should look at the base while listening for the sound of the ball hitting the glove. This makes far easier the otherwise difficult task of tracking the locations of the ball and two people's feet. One hypothesis is that Joyce failed to follow this rule.³

While fans often jeer at umpires that make incorrect rulings, criticism has particular force when umpires miss something clearly evident. That is, criticism of Joyce's ruling has a distinctively epistemic element. If this criticism is justified by Joyce's failure to follow a rule about how to best perceive force plays, then this case adds to growing evidence for the epistemic relevance of an experience's etiology.⁴ The case also suggests a new dimension of epistemic evaluation of that etiology. Joyce is accused of failing to follow a rule—one that he should have followed—about how to position himself mentally and physically to have the right kind of perceptual experience. That is, Joyce formed his experience irresponsibly, and this redounds on the epistemic standing of his resulting belief. This consideration is independent of more familiar epistemic influences on perceptual beliefs—such as reliability or inferential character.

In this paper, I articulate and defend this *sui generis* dimension of epistemic influence on perceptual belief. I argue that beliefs based on irresponsibly formed experiences—experiences whose causes were not appropriately regulated by the subject—are doxastically unjustified. In section I, I articulate the view I am defending. In section II, I defend the premise that Joyce's belief,

³ For popular discussion of this rule and its relationship to Joyce's call, see Bruce Weber, "First-Base Umpires Must Keep Eyes, and Ears, Open," *The New York Times*, June 10, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/11/sports/baseball/first-base-umpires-call-them-as-they-hear-them.html>.

For philosophical discussion of this rule as an instances of multimodal perception, see Casey O'Callaghan, "Grades of Multisensory Awareness," *Mind and Language*, XXXII, 2 (2019): 155-181; and Casey O'Callaghan, *A Multisensory Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁴ Susanna Sigel, "The Epistemic Impact of the Etiology of Experience," *Philosophical Studies*, CLXII, 3 (2013): 697-722.

but not that of a similarly situated novice, is unjustified. In section III, I show that this difference is best explained by irresponsible experience formation. In section IV, I show that the epistemic relevance of responsible experience formation has broad implications for theorizing about perceptual justification.

I. RESPONSIBLE EXPERIENCE FORMATION

Joyce failed to follow a rule—one that he should have followed—about how to best perceive force plays. I will argue that Joyce formed his experience irresponsibly and that this impacts the justification conferred to his belief. Specifically, I will defend two principles:

RESPONSIBILITY: S's experience E is responsibly formed⁵ with respect to subject matter p just in case S does what is epistemically obligatory for S to ensure that E is apt regarding p .

DOWNGRADE: If S forms a first-order belief B with content P on the basis of an experience that was irresponsibly formed with respect to the relevant subject matter p , B is thereby doxastically unjustified, assuming that S has no other basis for B.

I will call this view 'Perceptual Responsibilism.' Several clarifications are in order. **RESPONSIBILITY** analyzes responsible experience formation, not the formation of 'responsible experiences.' Susanna Siegel has recently argued that downgrade impacts an experience's 'epistemic charge,' such that both an experience and its etiology are epistemically assessable.⁶ But perceptual responsibilism is

⁵ In speaking of 'experience formation', I do not assume either that the subject has control over whether she has an experience or over the totality of the causal processes which produce that experience. Rather, I mean to capture the limited control that agents have in influencing the character of their experiences and thus their resulting aptness regarding some particular content. My thanks to an anonymous reader for encouraging this clarification.

⁶ Susanna Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception* (Oxford University Press: 2017).

neutral on these points. It allows, for example, that downgrade occurs because the *subject*—and not the experience or its etiology—is epistemically evaluable.

RESPONSIBILITY appeals to S's epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experience. Rik Peels argues that epistemic obligations (which he calls 'intellectual obligations') are obligations to *act* to prevent forming or maintaining a belief that is 'objectively or subjectively bad.'⁷ Like Peels, I will treat epistemic obligations as obligations to act.⁸ But unlike his broader conception, my 'epistemic obligations' hold of an agent in their capacity as a knower. Thus, a belief's 'goodness'

⁷ Rik Peels, *Responsible belief: a theory in ethics and epistemology* (Oxford University Press: 2017) at p. 99.

⁸ It is controversial whether there are epistemic reasons, norms, or obligations to act. For defenses, see Hilary Kornblith "Justified Belief and Epistemically Responsible Action," *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, 1 (1983): 33-48; Richard J. Hall and Charles R. Johnson, "The Epistemic Duty to Seek More Evidence," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, IIIV, 2 (1998): 129-139; Anthony Booth, "Can There Be Epistemic Reasons for Action?" *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, LXIII, 1 (2006): 133-144; Anthony Booth, "Motivating Epistemic Reasons for Action," *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, LXXVIII, 1 (2009): 265-271; Hartry Field, "Epistemology Without Metaphysics," *Philosophical Studies*, CXLIII (2009): 249-290; Daniel Singer and Sara Aronowitz, "What Epistemic Reasons Are For: Against the Belief-Sandwich Distinction," in B. Dunaway and D. Plunkett, eds., *Meaning, Decision, and Norms: Themes from the Work of Allan Gibbard* (Maize Books, 2021), pp. 74-96; and Jane Friedman, "The Epistemic and the Zetetic," *Philosophical Review*, CXXIX, 4 (2020): 501-536.

For criticism, see Thomas Kelly, "Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXVI, no. 3 (2003): 612-640; Stewart Cohen, "Theorizing about the Epistemic," *Inquiry*, LIX, 7-8 (2016): 839-857; Matthew McGrath, "Cohen on 'epistemic,'" *Inquiry*, LIX, 7-8 (2016): 889-905; and Mona Simion, "No Epistemic Norm for Action," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, LIV, 3 (2018): 231-238.

Opponents often claim that properly *epistemic* considerations bear directly on a proposition's truth-value; and thus cannot directly concern whether to act. For an articulation of such a distinction, see Pamela Hieronymi, "Controlling Attitudes," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, LXXXVII, 1 (2006): 45-74; Pamela Hieronymi, "Believing at Will," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, XXXIX, 1 (2009): 149-187; Pamela Hieronymi, "Reasoning First," in Ruth Change Kurt Sylvan, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Practical Reason* (Routledge, 2020), pp. 349-365.

I would like to emphasize three points about this debate and its relationship to the present argument. First, one can (and I do) acknowledge this distinction—between reasons whether-P and reasons whether to act in some way when inquiring whether-P—while also maintaining that the latter kind of reasons and corresponding obligations influence doxastic justification. Second, and conversely, one can (and opponents typically do) acknowledge the *existence* of the relevant obligations to act without accepting that they are properly *epistemic*. My thanks to Pamela Hieronymi for helpful discussion on these two points.

Third, therefore, because my argument is an inference to the best explanation of Joyce's unjustified belief (more on this explanandum below), I will not *assume* that there are epistemic obligations to act. Rather, I will argue that any other explanation of Joyce's unjustified belief is inadequate. Thus, the existence of epistemic obligations to act is a *conclusion* of my argument, not a premise. So while it is not my primary focus, this paper presents an indirect argument for the existence of epistemic obligations to act. And thus, for present purposes, it is enough that you acknowledge the existence of the relevant obligations while suspending judgment on whether they are properly epistemic. My thanks to an anonymous referee for encouraging discussion of this point.

concerns its truth and sensitivity to the evidence. As we will see, it is important for my argument that these obligations are not *merely* practical obligations.

I will assume that there are both general and special epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experiences. A general obligation to attend to immediately available relevant evidence is an example of the former. Crucially, I will claim that Joyce's obligation to follow the rule is a special obligation required of Joyce because he is a professional umpire. More on this below.

RESPONSIBILITY also appeals to an experience's 'aptness.' Experiences have multiple good-making features regarding a particular content. They are, for example, more or less informative regarding p and more or less reliable in these verdicts. An apt experience regarding p is one that appropriately trades off these different virtues.⁹ Aptness does not reduce to veridicality since different veridical perceptions can be more or less informative or reliable regarding p . And, crucially, responsibility does not reduce to aptness since RESPONSIBILITY concerns what one *does* to ensure aptness. One can have an apt experience—via luck—without forming that experience responsibly. And one can form an experience responsibly—but unluckily—and fail to form an apt experience. An entailment of these last two points is that responsible experience formation is neither necessary nor sufficient for having either a veridical experience or a true perceptual belief. In the case discussed here, Joyce uses an irresponsible experience-forming process to form a non-veridical experience based on which he forms a false belief. But, employing that same irresponsible process, he could also have formed a veridical experience resulting in a true, *but still unjustified*, belief.

RESPONSIBILITY is based on Ru Ye's formulation of responsible belief formation.¹⁰ On her view, forming a belief irresponsibly—such as by failing to appropriately respond to a defeater—

⁹ My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for helping me see this point.

¹⁰ Ru Ye, "Higher-Order Defeat and Intellectual Responsibility," *Synthese*, CXVII, 12 (2020): 5435-5455.

undermines doxastic justification. Perceptual responsibilism extends this idea to the formation of experiences. I have based my formulation on Ye's because, unlike other recent accounts such as Peels's, her formulation is neutral regarding which particular epistemic obligations we have, the conditions under which we have them, and the connection between those obligations and 'normative attitudes' like praise or blame. I will argue that in conditions like Joyce's, experts have a special epistemic obligation to enact certain procedures in forming their experiences. And I will claim that we have *prima facie* reason to blame experts who fail to meet such obligations. But rather than offering a general theory of the obligations we have and the conditions under which we have them—which would require a broader epistemic theory that is beyond the scope of this paper—I aim to show that my view is uniquely able to explain our verdicts in cases like Joyce's (see section II). Thus, I will remain neutral regarding a broader theory.

DOWNGRADE is based on Susanna Siegel's 'Doxastic Downgrade Thesis' (more on which in section III.3).¹¹ The restriction to first-order beliefs excludes beliefs like "It looks as if there is a cup in front of me," which describe the experience itself and are not intuitively subject to downgrade.

RESPONSIBILITY and DOWNGRADE are relativized to a particular subject matter of experience and to a particular belief content. These restrictions allow for an experience to confer justification for some beliefs (such as, "Donald ran to first base") without conferring justification to others (such as, "Donald touched the base immediately before Galarraga"). One potential worry for perceptual

¹¹ Siegel, "The Epistemic Impact of the Etiology of Experience," *op cit*. She also articulates a corresponding 'Propositional Downgrade Thesis', on which downgraded experiences confer less justificatory force. And she suggests that this principle follows from the Doxastic Downgrade Thesis if one accepts the popular thesis that one is doxastically justified in believing that P just in case one properly bases one's belief on sufficient propositional justification for P. See Jonathan L. Kvanvig, "Propositionalism and the Perspectival Character of Justification," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, XL, 1 (2003): 3-17. I will refrain from discussing propositional justification for two reasons. First, since my aim is to demonstrate that irresponsible experience formation is uniquely able to explain certain differences in doxastic justification, DOWNGRADE is the most directly relevant principle, not its propositional justification counterpart. Second, while Siegel's proposed link is plausible, it turns on controversial claims about the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification, on the nature of the basing relation, and on whether experiences themselves are epistemically or rationally evaluable. My argument will require no such commitments.

responsibilism is that in an easy case—such as when Donald reaches the base long before Galarraga—Joyce can form his experience irresponsibly—by failing to follow the rule—but remain justified in his belief that Donald was safe.¹² But this worry is addressed by the restriction to particular contents. Because the rule addresses the fine-grained temporal differences relevant to close cases—which are more difficult to discern—one can responsibly form an experience regarding an *easy* case without following it. That is, the same experience may be inapt to justify beliefs about fine-grained temporal differences but apt to justify more coarse-grained ones. These restrictions are neutral, however, regarding whether experiences have contents (which is controversial; see section III.3). They require only the uncontroversial claim that the same perceptual experience can confer different levels of justification for different beliefs.

Thus, my view is that since Joyce is a professional umpire, he has a special epistemic obligation to follow the rule when perceiving close force plays. Since he formed his experience about a close force play without following the rule, it follows from RESPONSIBILITY that he formed that experience irresponsibly. And since he formed his belief that Donald was safe based on the irresponsibly formed aspect of his experience, it follows from DOWNGRADE that that belief is unjustified. In the next two sections, I defend perceptual responsibilism by showing that it best explains our verdicts in Joyce-like cases. Before turning to this argument, however, I must clarify the explanandum. I turn to this now.

II. THE EXPLANANDUM

My primary aim in this paper, accomplished in the next section, is to show that irresponsible experience formation, but not defeat, reliability, or inference, can explain why Joyce's belief, but

¹² My thanks to Allan Hazlett for pressing this worry.

not that of a similarly situated novice, is unjustified. More generally, only perceptual responsibilism can account for the special epistemic obligations of what I will call ‘perceptual experts.’ In this section, I further articulate this explanandum and offer some initial considerations in its defense.

It is noteworthy, however, that one could reasonably (but wrongly, I think) deny the existence of special epistemic obligations while accepting perceptual responsibilism. Doing so would result in the view that Joyce and the novice either both responsibly or both irresponsibly formed their experiences and thus are equally justified in their resulting belief. This view lacks the corresponding explanatory advantages—since, as we will see, the verdict that Joyce and the novice are equally justified is explainable by defeat, reliability, or inference—but it could be defended by appeal to a more general theory of justification. Theories that explain doxastic justification by appeal to responsible *belief* formation—including ‘deontological’ and virtue epistemic approaches—are perceptual responsibilism’s natural allies.¹³ Defenders of such theories may subscribe to perceptual responsibilism without subscribing to special epistemic obligations of the sort posited here. Indeed, as I will discuss in section IV, perceptual responsibilism has theoretical interest beyond its ability to explain special epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experiences.

But a direct defense of perceptual responsibilism from the existence of special epistemic obligations—rather than an indirect defense from a general theory of justification—has three advantages. First, since a direct defense is neutral between general theories of justification, it can

¹³ For deontological approaches to responsible belief formation, see Kornblith, “Justified Belief and Epistemically Responsible Action,” *op. cit.*; Peels, *Responsible Belief*, *op. cit.*; and Ye, “Higher-order Defeat and Intellectual Responsibility,” *op. cit.* For opposition, see William Alston, “The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification,” in *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp 115-152.

For virtue epistemic approaches, see Lorraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility* (State University of New York Press, 2020); James Montmarquet, “Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, XXIX, 4 (1992): 331-341; Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

be accepted independently of such theories. Second, because a direct defense can be accepted independently of general theories, it can serve as an independent constraint on them. If the argument of this paper is sound, then any general theory of doxastic justification must explain the epistemic import of irresponsible experience formation just as, for example, they must explain the epistemic import of defeaters. But I will argue that perceptual responsibilism is incompatible with most prominent internalist and externalist conceptions of perceptual justification (see especially section IV). Finally, while previous defenses of responsibilist theories have focused on capturing the normative force of *existing* influences on doxastic justification — such as higher-order defeaters — a direct defense cements responsible experience formation as a *sui generis* kind of influence, directly akin to defeat or bad inference.¹⁴ Responsible experience formation is an independent epistemic phenomenon that deserves analysis from within multiple competing frameworks.

I will now present and defend the explanandum. Suppose that a novice also attempts to determine whether Donald is safe. The novice is in the same perceptual scenario as Joyce, in that they are standing where Joyce was standing, have available the same visual and auditory information, can attend to that information in all the ways Joyce could have, and so forth. And we will suppose that the novice attends to the perceptual evidence in the same way as Joyce — they do not follow the rule — and like Joyce they come to believe that Donald is safe. However, the novice's situation differs in two respects: first, the novice, unlike Joyce, does not know the rule; and second, the novice is not acting as an umpire — perhaps they are observing a practice from the first-base umpire's position. Thus, as I will soon suggest may be important to the case, the novice is not occupying the same epistemic social role as Joyce. The cases are otherwise the same. I will call this pair of cases

¹⁴ For an example of the former strategy, see Ye, “Higher-order Defeat and Intellectual Responsibility,” *op cit*.

‘the Joyce cases’. The explanandum is that, in the Joyce cases, the novice’s belief, but not Joyce’s, is justified.

Since Joyce is a professional umpire, I will say that he is a *perceptual expert* regarding force plays. A perceptual expert regarding a domain is someone who is epistemically obligated to form better experiences—for example, to attend to the right things—in that domain. Examples abound. Doctors are perceptual experts regarding x-rays. Police officers are perceptual experts regarding traffic violations. Chicken sexers are perceptual experts regarding chicken sex.

Two conditions plausibly generate special epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experiences and thus make someone a perceptual expert. First, when someone has proprietary knowledge about perceiving in a domain, they may be obliged to follow it. Since Joyce knows how to perceive force plays correctly, it is reasonable to expect that he will. Second, when someone occupies a special epistemic social role, they may be obliged to follow standard rules for occupiers of that role.¹⁵ Since Joyce is a professional umpire and performing as such, it is reasonable to expect him to follow standard perceptual rules for umpires. Sometimes these two conditions might come apart, as when an incompetent umpire fails to know the rule or when an enthusiast novice does. And we might wonder about their epistemic obligations in such cases. But since the conditions go together in the Joyce cases, and since my argument requires only one positive instance, I will not attempt to settle this issue here. Similarly, I will not attempt to settle what obligations Joyce is under when he is not acting as an umpire. Perhaps Joyce is not obligated to follow the rule when he is merely watching a game for fun, for example. More generally, obligations regarding experience formation may be conditional on the subject having something like an ‘inquiring attitude ’ toward

¹⁵ Richard Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LX, 3 (2000): 667-695; and Sanford Goldberg, *To the Best of Our Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

the relevant question (*a la* Jane Friedman).¹⁶ As I will understand the Joyce cases, both Joyce and the novice take an inquiring attitude toward the question of whether Donald was safe; and Joyce, but not the novice, is acting as an umpire. I think that under these conditions Joyce, but not the novice, is obligated to follow the rule.

In the Joyce cases, then, (1) both the perceptual expert and novice form the same perceptual belief in the same circumstances using the same procedure, (2) the expert, but not the novice, is epistemically obligated to follow some perceptual rule in such circumstances, but (3) neither the expert nor the novice follows that rule. The first idea behind the explanandum is that being a perceptual expert in a domain raises the standard of justification for perceptual beliefs regarding that domain. Since Joyce, a perceptual expert, fails to follow a perceptual rule that is epistemically obligatory for him in his circumstances, his perceptual belief is unjustified.

However, it is equally important for the explanandum that the novice's belief be justified. But in many cases to which perceptual expertise applies, it is implausible that a novice's perceptual belief would be justified. Radiologists, for example, are taught *how to examine* an x-ray for fractures, *where to look* for gallstones, and so on. But in the case of reading x-rays, having such expertise is necessary for forming justified perceptual beliefs. If a novice looks at her x-ray and wonders whether she has gallstones, she should simply suspend judgment.

It is therefore important for the explanandum that the Joyce cases regard what I will call an 'everyday content,' about which novices regularly form justified perceptual beliefs. In the Joyce cases, this content is the temporal order of three plainly perceivable events. Other examples of everyday content to which expertise nonetheless applies include the color or shape of everyday objects (regarding which artists are perceptual experts), whether the appearance of clouds indicates

¹⁶ Jane Friedman, "Inquiry and Belief," *Noûs*, LIII, 2 (2019): 296-315.

rain (regarding which meteorologists are perceptual experts), and whether a plant is a bush or a tree (regarding which botanists are perceptual experts).

I will assume that many everyday contents are such that (1) novices can form justified beliefs about them when following everyday perceptual procedures, but (2) there are (or could be) proprietary expert rules for perceiving them. I make this assumption because, as the above examples make clear, many everyday contents (and perhaps all of them) are subject to, or could be subject to, proprietary expert perceptual rules. But our beliefs regarding these contents, following ordinary perceptual procedures, are paradigm examples of justified beliefs. They result from obviously reliable (enough) belief-forming processes, for example. Thus, failing to make this assumption would have absurd skeptical implications.

And because there is nothing special about the Joyce cases, I will assume they meet these conditions. That is, I will assume that perceiving the temporal order of three events is an ‘everyday’ subject matter and that the novice’s perceptual procedure is thus sufficient to justify her belief, despite her failure to follow an expert perceptual rule. If you are concerned that the Joyce cases do not meet these conditions — because, for example, you think everyday perceptual procedures are unreliable in this context — then the above discussion gives you a simple recipe for generating a pair that do: assume that both a novice and an expert employ the same everyday procedure to form identical perceptual experiences regarding some everyday subject matter and that both form identical perceptual beliefs regarding the corresponding everyday content based on that experience (and on no other basis); then assume that the expert has a special obligation to enact some

procedure for perceiving that everyday subject matter. Under these conditions, this section argues, the novice, but not the expert, is justified in their belief.¹⁷

One alternative to the explanandum—which could account for why we negatively assess Joyce, but not the novice—is that while both form unjustified beliefs, in virtue of not having followed the rule, only Joyce is blameworthy for this failure.¹⁸ But since most (if not all) everyday contents are (or could be) subject to expert perceptual rules, and since we rarely follow those rules, this view entails the same skeptical absurdity referenced above: that we are almost never justified in our perceptual beliefs about everyday contents.

Thus, I will assume that the novice's belief is justified in the Joyce case (or your preferred cases, following the recipe above). What remains to be defended is the idea that, nonetheless, Joyce's belief is unjustified. As mentioned above, the basic idea behind this claim is that being a perceptual expert in a domain raises the standard of justification for perceptual beliefs regarding that domain.

But this part of the explanandum will strike many as implausible. By hypothesis, Joyce and the novice did the same thing, resulting in the same experience, in response to which they formed the same belief, all in the same epistemic context. On most popular accounts of doxastic justification, it simply follows that their beliefs are equally justified. To take just one example, since Joyce and the novice have the same relevant evidence, and since they base their belief on this evidence in the

¹⁷ You may wonder, given that there is a recipe for generating Joyce-like cases, why I have focused on such an idiosyncratic case, which relies on details of a sport that many are unfamiliar with, and on rules for umpiring which almost no one is familiar with. Aside from my interests in promoting the sport, which are non-existent, the reason is that this case is particularly well-suited to my purpose. The content, as just explained, is plausibly everyday, unlike in many expert perceptual cases, such as reading X-rays. And the rule for perceiving force plays is both easily articulable and widely practiced, which is not true of other cases involving everyday content (like perceiving colors, for example). And it is plausible that Joyce *actually* failed to follow the rule and that this explains his ruling.

¹⁸ My thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.

same way, it follows from evidentialism that if the novice's belief is justified, Joyce's must be as well.¹⁹ What, then, is the *epistemic* difference between the cases?

My answer, of course, is that Joyce, but not the novice, formed his experience irresponsibly and that first-order beliefs based on irresponsibly-formed experiences are unjustified. And I will argue that prominent theories fail to account for the epistemic influence of responsible experience formation on perceptual justification. It is thus no surprise that prominent epistemic theories fail to make sense of the explanandum.

But clearly, I cannot base my argument for the explanandum on my proposed explanans. Thus, I cannot offer a direct theoretical defense of it. There are, however, at least three ways that one could defend the explanandum without a direct argument.

One route is to defend some general theory of responsible *belief* formation from which the explanandum may follow. But this route has several important limitations. First, as discussed above, one can commit to such general theories without committing to special epistemic obligations and thus not account for the explanandum. Second, those theories are controversial for the same reason the explanandum is, so such an appeal is unlikely to convince someone that does not already accept it. And third, even those who accept such theories may doubt that they extend to experience-forming processes. And so, an independent argument is preferable.

A second route to defending the explanandum is to insist that it is 'intuitive' or 'pretheoretical.' I noted in the introduction that fans' jeers seem to have an epistemic component, that they think an expert umpire should have known better. This suggests that the folk believe the explanandum. And I could argue that those who oppose it are merely in the grips of their preferred theory. This

¹⁹ More precisely, Joyce and the novice have the same evidence regarding this particular play. Given his expertise, Joyce has a great deal more evidence about baseball plays in general and perhaps certain higher-order evidence about his perceptual faculties in force plays. As I will argue in section III.1, however, this evidence does not defeat his first-order evidence, which the novice shares. Thus, even considering such evidence, evidentialism predicts that if the novice's belief is justified, Joyce's should be as well.

is not my preferred route, however. For one, as Allan Hazlett has pointed out to me, fan criticisms are a poor place to look for sensible epistemic verdicts. And, anyway, establishing folk judgments requires far more than mere assertion. And it is, at best, unclear what role folk intuitions or pretheoretic judgments should play in our theorizing.

Instead, my preferred route to defending the explanandum is to argue against the most plausible alternative: the claim that Joyce (and not the novice) fails only a *practical*, rather than epistemic, obligation. Such a failure need not redound on doxastic justification. On this view, both Joyce and the novice are justified in believing that Donald is safe, but Joyce has a special obligation to *act* on his beliefs only when he has followed the rule. The recent epistemic literature has proposed several cases which fit this general profile. Consider:

Jonathan is a quality inspector at the widget factory. One in a million widgets produced at the factory is defective. Jonathan's job is to randomly inspect widgets to confirm that they work. Before inspecting a widget, he can justifiably believe that that widget is working, since only one in a million is defective. But before inspecting the widget, it would be inappropriate for Jonathan to write down 'working' on his form.²⁰

Matilda is Derek's oncologist. She receives reliable testimony from a colleague — who has reviewed Derek's tests but who does not share the details — that Derek has cancer. Thus, Matilda is justified in believing that Derek has cancer. But it would be inappropriate, based on this evidence, for Matilda to *tell* Derek that he has cancer since assertion in this context requires that Matilda have more information about the facts of the case.²¹

²⁰ Simplified from Jonathan Adler, "Reconciling Open-Mindedness and Belief," *Theory and Research in Education*, II, 2 (2004): 127-142.

²¹ Simplified from Jennifer Lackey, "Assertion and Isolated Second-Hand Knowledge," in Jessica Brown and Herman Cappelen, eds, *Assertion: New Philosophical Essays* (Oxford University Press: 2011), pp. 251-276.

In both cases, while the subject's belief is justified, acting on this belief would violate a special practical obligation. Could we give a similar explanation of the Joyce cases? Perhaps, for example, negative assessments of Joyce are underwritten by the conviction that he has a professional obligation to make a call only when he has followed the appropriate rules.

Two crucial differences between such cases and the Joyce case prevent an explanation in *purely* pragmatic terms. First, while most will agree that Jonathan and Matilda have the appropriate doxastic attitude given their circumstances, Joyce seems to have the wrong doxastic attitude given his. Regardless of his subsequent ruling, given that he failed to follow the rule, he should suspend judgment about whether Donald was safe. Joyce's situation is analogous to that of a scientist who uses improper procedures when conducting an experiment. In the latter case, it is not simply that the scientist should abstain from publishing the results; they should also refrain from forming or updating their belief. Being a scientist requires higher standards for forming beliefs regarding one's domain.

Second, since Jonathan's and Matilda's special obligations are practical, our negative evaluation of them is specific to a particular practical context. Suppose, for example, that a friend of Jonathan's asks if he believes a particular widget purchased from Jonathan's factory (which Jonathan did not inspect) would work. In that context, it would be appropriate for Jonathan to assert that it would. Similarly, if another colleague were to ask whether Derek has cancer, it would be appropriate for Matilda to assert that he does. But our evaluation of the Joyce case is not similarly context sensitive: if a friend were to ask Joyce later what he thought of the case, he should not assert that Donald was safe, since he failed to follow the rule.²² Thus, it does not appear that

²² I am not claiming that Joyce's special obligation is itself context neutral. As noted above, when not acting as an umpire, Joyce may be able to responsibly form a belief about a force play without following the rule. The point is that, given that he formed this particular belief in a context in which he is required to follow the rule, the fact that he failed to follow the rule redounds on the epistemic status of that belief. And because of this influence on the epistemic status of his belief, he then has a context-neutral obligation not to employ that belief in thought or action.

our different evaluations of Joyce and the novice can be explained by a mere difference in their practical obligations.²³

This concludes my articulation and initial defense of the explanandum. As I understand the Joyce cases, they regard an everyday content about which novices regularly form justified perceptual beliefs. Since the novice follows everyday procedures in forming their experience and corresponding belief, their belief is justified. However, since Joyce is a perceptual expert regarding force plays, he is obligated to follow special procedures when forming his experience. Since he failed to follow those procedures, I claim that his belief is unjustified. I argued that that final claim was more plausible than the most salient alternative: that Joyce failed a practical, rather than epistemic, obligation.

I am aware, however, that I have only addressed some of the concerns one might have with the explanandum. A complete defense is beyond the scope of this paper. But this paper should

²³ An anonymous reader has suggested that the difference between Joyce's and the novice's beliefs is that while both are *synchronically* justified, in that they are properly based on adequate grounds, only the novice's belief is *diachronically* justified, in that it has been arrived at after adequate investigation. See Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification* (Oxford University Press, 2001). This interpretation could allow us to understand Joyce as being justified 'in the relevant sense,' while also explaining our negative epistemic evaluation of his belief.

The question that we must ask, then, is what it is to be justified in this 'relevant sense' and how we determine its extension. I mean to be analyzing the kind of justification which is necessary for knowledge, which is related to epistemic attitudes of praise and blame, and so forth. My argument concerns whether *that sense* of justification is merely synchronic, or if it also has diachronic features. I claim that Joyce is unjustified in the relevant sense because he fails to meet a diachronic requirement. The imagined objector thinks otherwise.

The difficulty here is that it is not always clear how to distinguish between different sorts of normative evaluation, such as between epistemic and practical evaluation of a belief-forming process. And this is even more challenging if there are multiple kinds of epistemic evaluation, only one of which is of the 'relevant' sort. This is why, I think, it is more natural to think of synchronic and diachronic theories as competing accounts of a single notion of epistemic justification than as independent kinds of justification. It is just not clear what we get from this extra theoretical baggage. This is all to say: I do not expect to fully satisfy someone who is committed to this interpretation of the case. If that is you, see my remarks on the next page.

I can, however, point out that my first consideration against the pragmatic interpretation applies here as well: Joyce appears to have the (all epistemic things considered) wrong doxastic attitude given his circumstances. If so, then it is hard to understand him as having knowledge-conferring justification, and epistemic blame seems *prima facie* fitting. Thus, even if he is synchronically justified, it does not appear that he is justified in the relevant sense. My thanks to Allan Hazlett for his help in making this point.

retain much of its theoretical interest for those skeptical of the explanandum. The rest of this paper argues for the following conditional: *if* the explanandum (or some suitable variant) holds, then we should accept irresponsible experience formation as a *sui generis* influence on doxastic justification. This argument is interesting, even in conditional form, because it suggests that responsibilist theories have *normative* — not just meta-normative — bite. By contrast, previous defenses of responsibilist theories — such as Ye’s account of higher-order defeat — have primarily aimed to capture the normative force of *existing* influences on doxastic justification.²⁴ Second, as I noted above, one could reasonably deny the existence of special epistemic obligations while accepting perceptual responsibilism. Thus, regardless of whether the explanandum holds, this paper does crucial work in articulating responsible experience formation and its role in doxastic justification. Finally, as I will argue in section IV, perceptual responsibilism has theoretical import for our understanding of perceptual justification beyond its ability to explain special epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experience. Thus, one need not be committed to such obligations to explore its utility.

III. COMPETING EXPLANANS

I have just argued that the novice’s belief, but not Joyce’s, is justified. Perceptual responsibilism provides a straightforward explanation of this difference: since Joyce, but not the novice, is epistemically obligated to follow the rule, it follows from RESPONSIBILITY that the novice, but not Joyce, formed their experience responsibly. And since they both formed their belief on the exclusive basis of this experience, it follows from DOWNGRADE that the novice, but not Joyce, is justified. This explanation is non-traditional in a variety of ways. Where accounts of empirical justification

²⁴ Ye, “Higher-order defeat and intellectual responsibility,” *op. cit.*

typically begin with perceptual experiences (and other mental states), perceptual responsibilism makes room for the direct epistemic relevance of the formation of perceptual experiences, including how extra-bodily processes contribute to those experiences. While some have defended the epistemic relevance of the etiology of experiences, they have typically done so by appealing to top-down effects from other mental states, not the direct control of the formation of experiences themselves.²⁵ Thus, responsible experience formation is a different *kind* of influence on the doxastic justification of perceptual beliefs. Therefore, if the Joyce cases are to motivate positing such an influence, we must first rule out a more traditional explanation of the difference in justification between Joyce and the novice. I will consider three alternative explanations — from defeat, reliability, and inference — and show that they fail. The upshot is that responsible experience formation is an independent determinant of the epistemic status of perceptual beliefs.

III.1. Defeat

A common position — particularly among internalists — is that the etiology of experience is not directly relevant to justification, but that evidence *about* that etiology can defeat otherwise justified perceptual beliefs.²⁶ If, for instance, I seem to see a red cup sitting on a table, then I am *prima facie* justified in believing that the cup is red. But if I learn that the cup is illuminated by red lights, then I cannot rule out its being a white cup that merely looks red in these conditions. Thus, my belief is defeated by my knowledge of the illumination. It has recently been proposed that a fact is a ‘normative defeater’ if (a) it would function as a classical defeater if known and (b) the subject *should* know it.²⁷ If I ignore evidence about the lighting conditions — such that I am negligent in not

²⁵ Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception*, *op. cit.*

²⁶ For example, see John Pollock and Joseph Cruz, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge, Second Edition* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

²⁷ Jennifer Lackey, *Learning From Words: Testimony as a Source of Knowledge* (Oxford University Press: 2008), at p. 45.

knowing that the scene is illuminated by red lights — then my belief that the cup is red is (normatively) defeated by this unpossessed evidence.²⁸

Could defeat explain the Joyce case? Since Joyce failed to follow the rule, perhaps he knows that his experience was formed unreliably. That knowledge would constitute an undercutting defeater for his belief. If Joyce's belief is defeated, then it is not justified. Moreover, since the novice does not know the rule, this knowledge cannot defeat their belief. So defeat could explain why the verdict differs between the cases.

But it is unlikely that Joyce is in a position to know whether he followed the rule and thus formed his experience unreliably, since the difference between following and not following the rule is subtle. Expert perceivers do not generally attend to the precise way that they form their experiences. Following the rule is an application of procedural knowledge, akin to following a rule of inference.²⁹ When we do the latter, we do not reason *from* the rule; we simply reason *in accordance* with it.³⁰ Similarly, when Joyce follows the rule, he merely perceives in accordance with it. A consequence is that Joyce can irresponsibly fail to follow the rule — just as one might irresponsibly fail to follow a rule of inference — without knowing that he failed to follow it. If Joyce does not

²⁸ For defences of normative defeat, see Kornblith, "Justified Belief and Epistemically Responsible Action," *op. cit.*; Jennifer Lackey, "Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, XLIX, 197 (1999): 471-490; Jennifer Lackey, "Memory as a Generative Epistemic Source," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXX, 3 (2005): 636-658; Keith DeRose, "Ought We to Follow Our Evidence?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LX, 3 (2000): 697-706; Kevin Meeker, "Justification and the Social Nature of Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXIX, 1 (2004): 156-172; John Gibbons, "Access Externalism," *Mind*, CXV, 457 (2006): 19-39; Baron Reed, "Epistemic Circularity Squared? Skepticism about Common Sense," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXXIII, 1 (2006): 186-197; Isaac Record, "Technology and Epistemic Possibility," *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*, XLIV (2013): 319-336; Christopher Michael Cloos, "Responsibilist Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies*, CLXXII (2015): 2999-3016; and Goldberg, *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Procedural knowledge in this sense is a kind of competence. It is a learned ability, the manifestation of which results in apt belief (or, in this case, experience). See Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁰ To assume otherwise would result in a Carroll regress. See Lewis Carroll. "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles," *Mind*, IV, 14 (1895): 278-280.

know whether he failed to follow the rule, then that knowledge cannot constitute a classical defeater for his belief.

Could a *normative* defeater explain Joyce's unjustified belief? That is, *should* Joyce know that he failed to follow the rule? The question is not just whether Joyce, drawing on some local features of the case, has such an obligation, since, of course, he may, but rather whether all instances of irresponsible experience formation entail the existence of a normative defeater. That would be true only if an obligation to follow a procedural rule entails an obligation to know whether you have succeeded in following that rule. But there is no general obligation to know what procedures you have employed in arriving at a belief or experience. In the belief case, that would entail the clearly false claim that higher-order defeaters accompany all irrational inferences. In the experience case, it would entail an obligation to attend to the application of habitual perceptual rules, even when doing so decreases performance (as it often does). That would be a surprising requirement. If there is not that requirement, then it is possible to be obligated to follow a rule about how to form one's experience without an obligation to know whether you have succeeded. In such cases, irresponsible experience formation will not entail the existence of a normative defeater.

In summary, while it is true that evidence of Joyce's failure to follow the rule would constitute a defeater for his belief, there is no reason to think he either possesses or should possess this evidence. More generally, whenever there is an obligation to follow a rule about the formation of one's experience without an obligation to know whether one succeeds in following that rule, irresponsible experience formation, but not defeat, can explain an unjustified perceptual belief.

III.2. Reliability

While internalists typically appeal to defeat to explain a difference in the doxastic justification of a perceptual belief, externalists can explain the difference more directly by appeal to the experience's

unreliability. By hypothesis, the rule Joyce failed to follow improves the reliability of his experiences. If doxastic justification is at least partially determined by the reliability of the process that produces a belief, then failing to follow the rule may result in a belief that is less justified than a belief formed in adherence to the rule. This could explain why Joyce's belief is unjustified.

The proposal faces two immediate problems. First, the fact that following the rule improves reliability does not entail that failing to follow the rule drops reliability below the threshold for *prima facie* justification. Having failed to follow the rule, Joyce uses ordinary perceptual procedures in forming his experience. Reliabilists typically assume that these procedures are reliable enough for *prima facie* justification. So it is unclear how the standard reliabilist picture can explain Joyce's unjustified belief.

But suppose it does. Then the explanation faces a second problem: the novice and Joyce employed the same belief-forming process in the same context. It follows that they were equally reliable. Either this reliability is above the threshold — and both are justified — or it is below the threshold — and neither is justified. Thus, reliability cannot explain why Joyce's belief, *but not the novice's*, is unjustified.

An anonymous reviewer has suggested another possible response on behalf of the reliabilist. On the 'alternative reliable process' (ARP) account of defeat, S's belief that P is defeated if S has available a more reliable process which would result in S's not believing that P.³¹ Intuitively, Joyce, but not the novice, has available a more reliable process incorporating the application of the rule. And, by hypothesis, applying that rule may have resulted in the correct ruling that Donald was not safe. So, if we assume that experience formation is a partial constituent of the relevant process that

³¹ Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?" in George S. Pappas, ed., *Justification and Knowledge, Philosophical Studies Series in Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1979), pp. 1-23; and Jack Lyons, *Perception and basic beliefs: Zombies, modules, and the problem of the external world* (Oxford University Press, 2009). See also Goldberg, *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, *op. cit.*

produces a belief, it follows from ARP that Joyce's belief, but not the novice's, is defeated and thus unjustified.

This is not what Goldman or Lyons intended in extending ARP as a reliabilist theory of defeat. As I have just argued, Joyce's unjustified belief is not explainable by the presence of a defeater. And if it were, the relevant defeater would be *evidence* that Joyce formed his experience irresponsibly, not the *mere fact* that he did. Goldman makes clear that he does not intend ARP to include the application of alternative evidence-gathering processes like Joyce's attending differently to the force play:

“[I]t seems implausible to say all ‘available’ processes ought to be used, at least if we include such processes as gathering new evidence. Surely a belief can sometimes be justified even if additional evidence-gathering would yield a different doxastic attitude. What I think we should have in mind here are such additional processes as calling previously acquired evidence to mind, assessing the implications of that evidence, etc.”³²

It is interesting, then, that applying ARP in this way gets the Joyce case right. Perhaps Goldman was too quick to dismiss a broader application of ARP.

However, ARP fails to capture a variant of the Joyce cases. In section II, I argued that perceptual experts like Joyce should be held to higher epistemic standards. It follows that Joyce is unjustified in failing to follow the rule even if, either way, he comes to the correct conclusion that Donald was out. But since ARP is a theory of defeat, it requires that the alternative reliable process result in a different doxastic attitude. So if Joyce would form the same belief regardless of whether he follows the rule, irresponsible experience formation, but not ARP, can explain why his belief is unjustified.

³² Goldman, “What is Justified Belief?” *op. cit.*, p. 20.

What if we remove ARP's requirement that the alternative process result in a different belief? Then the view says that S's belief in P is unjustified if there is a more reliable process that S could have employed which also results in a belief whether-P. That principle would explain both the original and modified Joyce cases. It would do so by entailing that one is justified in a perceptual belief only if one employs the most reliable available process in forming that belief. This, in turn, entails that the subject should use any available procedures to form an apt experience with respect to that belief. That is, the view entails perceptual responsibilism. It thus no longer provides a *competing* explanation of the Joyce case.

In summary, mere reliability cannot explain why Joyce's belief, but not the novice's, is unjustified. A reliabilist account of defeat—but not the version typically defended by reliabilists—can account for the cases, but not the modified cases in which following and not following the rule result in the same belief. There is a version of reliabilism that can explain all of the cases (though see section IV), but that version entails perceptual responsibilism. I conclude that reliabilist resources do not provide a competing explanation of Joyce-like cases.

III.3. Inference

Susanna Siegel has recently argued that perceptual experiences are caused by rationally-assessable inferences.³³ When an experience is caused by an irrational inference, she argues, its justificatory force is downgraded.³⁴ I will call this view 'perceptual inferentialism.' If it can be shown that Joyce's

³³ Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ This view is also defended by Matthew McGrath, "Phenomenal Conservatism and Cognitive Penetration: The 'Bad Basis' Counterexamples," in Christ Tucker, ed., *Seemings and Justification: New Essays on Dogmatism and Phenomenal Conservatism* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 225-247. It has its roots in earlier discussions of the possibility and epistemic import of cognitive penetration, for example in Paul M. Churchland, "Perceptual Plasticity and Theoretical Neutrality: A Reply to Jerry Fodor," *Philosophy of Science*, LV, 2 (1988): 167-87; and Jerry Fodor, "A Reply to Churchland's 'Perceptual Plasticity and Theoretical Neutrality,'" *Philosophy of Science*, LV, 2 (1988): 188-198.

experience was formed by an irrational inference, then perceptual inferentialism can explain Joyce's unjustified belief without appeal to irresponsible experience formation.

It is instructive when looking for such an inference that Siegel's paradigm cases look very different from the Joyce cases. Whatever the exact nature of Joyce's epistemic failure, it is related to the fact that he failed to follow a rule about how to place himself physically and mentally to best perceive force plays. In Siegel's cases, by contrast, the subject is irrationally influenced by *some other mental state*. Consider:

ANGER: Before seeing Jack, Jill fears that Jack is angry at her. When she sees him, her fear causes her to have a visual experience in which he looks angry to her.³⁵

Siegel claims that Jill's experience is downgraded because of an irrational influence of her fear on her experience. That influence amounts to an irrational inference from Jill's 'outlook' — the sum-total of her beliefs, desires, assumptions, and so on regarding Jack and anger — to her experience.

This explanation of what goes wrong in ANGER requires that one accept four controversial claims. The first two hang together: since Siegel's explanation involves an inference from a fear to an experience with the content 'Jack is angry at me,' it requires, first, that experiences have content and, second, that some of that content is rich.³⁶ While Siegel has argued extensively for these claims, they remain the subject of much debate.³⁷

Perceptual inferentialism's third controversial commitment is that perceptual contents are cognitively penetrable. On Siegel's view, experiences are downgraded when they are formed by an

³⁵ Siegel, "The Epistemic Impact of the Etiology of Experience," *op. cit.*, p. 689.

³⁶ Rich content is not required for perceptual inferentialism — since presumably Jill's experience of Jack's face as red could be inferred from her fear that his face is red — but it *is* necessary for an inferentialist account of this particular case (and others that Siegel discusses), since it is the rich content which is purportedly downgraded by its inferential etiology.

³⁷ See Susanna Siegel, *The Contents of Visual Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2011) for a defense of rich perceptual content. For a review of the surrounding debate, see Grace Helton, "Recent Issues in High-Level Perception," *Philosophy Compass*, XI, 12 (2016): 851-862.

irrational inference from a subject's outlook — her beliefs, assumptions, moods, and so forth — to her experience. This is not an accident: Siegel's argument that experiences are formed by inferences, discussed below, is that the influence of cognitive states on experiences is epistemically on par with their influence on beliefs. Thus, the inferential character of perception is tied to its cognitive penetrability. But it is not clear whether experiences are penetrable in this way.³⁸

Finally, perceptual inferentialism requires that this cognitive penetration amount to a rationally-assessable inference. This too is controversial. After all, paradigm rational inferences do not look like cognitive penetration. Logical reasoning, for example, is typically conscious, it involves recognizing that a conclusion is supported by some premises, and our drawing the conclusion is optional.³⁹ Cognitive penetration, by contrast, is never conscious, it never involves recognizing that an experience is supported by some premises, and perceptual experiences are paradigmatically non-optional. Siegel has responded to each of these points, showing there are inferentially-formed beliefs that lack each of these features.⁴⁰ And she presents a positive case that experiences are formed by inferences. She points out that cases like ANGER are exactly analogous to inferentially irrational beliefs. Jill's fear influences her experiences in a way that, were the result a belief, we would regard as inferentially irrational. Jill's conclusion gives 'improper weight' to her fears:⁴¹

Her fear makes her respond to the blank stare by experiencing Jack as angry, just as in a case of fearful thinking, it might make her respond to the blank stare by believing that Jack

³⁸ Chaz Firestone and Brian J. Scholl, "Cognition Does Not Affect Perception: Evaluating the Evidence for 'Top-Down' Effects," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, XXXIX (2016): e229.

³⁹ The view that inference requires 'taking' or 'reckoning' is defended in Robert Audi, "Belief Reason, and Inference," *Philosophical Topics*, XIV, 1 (1986): 27-65; Robert Audi, "Doxastic Involuntarism and the Ethics of Belief," in Matthias Steup, ed., *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 93-111; Paul Boghossian, "What is Inference?," *Philosophical Studies*, CIX (2014), 1-18; John Broome, "Comments on Boghossian," *Philosophical Studies*, CLXIX, 1 (2014): 19-25; and Elijah Chudnoff, "The Rational Roles of Intuition," in Anthony Robert Booth and Darrel P. Rowbottom, eds., *Intuitions* (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 9-35.

⁴⁰ Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception*, *op. cit.*, ch. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

is angry. Here, experiences are responses to other experiences, just as conclusions are responses to inferential inputs. And like inferential responses generally, responses to experiences can be explained by the subject's rational sensitivity to the relations, as the subject sees them, between Jack's blank stare and the rest of her outlook concerning Jack and anger.⁴²

Since fearful seeing and fearful thinking go wrong in the same way, and since we say that fearful thinking results from an irrational inference, we should say the same of fearful seeing.

But the claim remains controversial. Many have argued that experiences, unlike beliefs, cannot be epistemically 'based' on their causes and thus cannot be formed by inferences.⁴³

It is not my goal to relitigate these disputes. My point is that perceptual inferentialism depends on each of these commitments and that irrational inference is a competing explanation in Joyce-like cases only if these commitments turn out to be true. Perceptual responsibilism, by contrast, entails none of these commitments. It is neutral on our account of perceptual content, so long as one accepts that some experiences are more apt for a given belief than others. It is neutral about which kinds of influences — cognitive penetration, attention, and so forth — are the ones for which we are epistemically responsible, so long as we can regulate those influences with our actions. And it does not require any particular rational connection between an action and an experience so long as the action meets the conditions for responsibility.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 118.

⁴³ Jack Lyons, "Circularity, Reliability, and the Cognitive Penetrability of Perception," *Philosophical Issues*, XXI (2011): 289-311; Jack Lyons, "Inferentialism and Cognitive Penetration of Perception," *Episteme*, XIII, 1 (2016): 1-28; Harmen Ghijsen, "Grounding Perceptual Dogmatism: What are Perceptual Seemings?" *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, LIII, 2 (2015): 196-215; Harmen Ghijsen, "The Real Epistemic Problem of Cognitive Penetration," *Philosophical Studies*, CLXXIII (2016): 1457-1475; Harmen Ghijsen, "How to Explain the Rationality of Perception," *Analysis*, LXXVIII, 3 (2018): 500-512; and Ori Beck, Mazviita Chiriuuta, Raja Rosenhagen, Susanna Siegel, Declan Smithies, and Alison Springle, "Discussion of Susanna Siegel's 'Can Perceptual Experiences Be Rational?'" *Analytic Philosophy*, LIX, 1 (2018): 175-190.

We are now in a position to see why a perceptual inferentialist explanation of the Joyce cases is unavailable. Such an explanation would require (1) that Joyce's experience be detrimentally influenced by his outlook, (2) that this influence be structurally similar to inferentially irrational belief formation, and (3) that this influence not obtain in the novice case. None of these features are present in the Joyce cases. There is no reason to think — and anyway the case does not require that we think — that Joyce antecedently believed, desired, feared, or had any particular attitude toward Donald's being safe. The judgment that Joyce's belief is unjustified relies on a claim about his failure to follow the rule. The difference between the good case — in which he followed that rule — and the bad case — in which he did not — is not a difference in Joyce's outlook regarding Donald's being safe. Second, the transition from Joyce's failure to follow the rule to his experiencing Donald as safe does not resemble an inferentially irrational belief-forming process. And last, since Joyce and the novice used the same process in forming their experiences, even if Joyce's experience were formed by an irrational inference, the novice's would be as well.

One could respond that Siegel's ANGER case, an apparent instance of an irrational influence on *experience*, is the wrong comparison. Siegel also argues that irrational influences on *attention* affect the epistemic standing of resulting experiences.⁴⁴ She considers, for example, a case in which an overconfident host (Vivek) attempts to determine whether his guests are enjoying themselves but, due to his presumption that they are, fails to attend to someone sulking in the corner, waiting for a ride home.⁴⁵ Vivek's outlook illicitly influences his attention such that only confirming evidence is experienced. Thus, Siegel claims that Vivek's resulting experience is irrational. Since I have claimed that Joyce's unjustified belief is explained by his failure to follow a rule about allocating

⁴⁴ Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception*, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-60.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

his attention, a similar explanation may be available here.⁴⁶ That would require that Joyce's failure be explainable by an irrational inference from his outlook to the allocation of his attentional resources. But without looking at exactly how that inference should go, we can see that this explanation would face the same challenges as the one considered above. Here again, since there is no reason to assume that Joyce had any particular antecedent attitude toward Donald's being safe, the case cannot be explained by an inference from such an attitude to his attention. And even if such an inferential explanation were available, it would also be available in the novice case since they employed the same process in forming their experiences. So this explanation cannot explain why the verdicts differ between the cases.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

The argument just presented relies on experts' special obligations to enact procedures not required of novices. The corresponding differences in justification, I have argued, are explainable only by perceptual responsibilism. Thus, irresponsible experience formation has a *sui generis* impact on the doxastic justification of perceptual beliefs. This argument might give the impression that the scope of that impact is minimal, perhaps only relevant to theorists of perceptual justification. Once this influence is established, however, perceptual responsibilism has effects throughout our epistemic lives. It is not just inside baseball.

While my emphasis here has been on special obligations, it is likely that there are also epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experiences that hold more generally, such as an obligation to attend to immediately available evidence regarding propositions toward which one has an inquiring attitude. My occurrent belief that it is acceptable to feed the zoo animals, for example, is

⁴⁶ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for making this point.

undermined by the presence, even if I do not notice it, of a sign that says otherwise.⁴⁷ Further, I suggested in section II that there may be at least two kinds of special epistemic obligations: those grounded in what we know and those grounded in our epistemic social roles. Joyce's special obligation to follow the rule holds both in virtue of what he knows and his social role. Similar cases abound: scientists have special obligations to attend to certain kinds of evidence; police officers have special obligations to recognize when an object is or is not a weapon; psychologists have special obligations to pick up on signs of trauma. Other special obligations may be contingently universal, such as an obligation, given widespread evidence, to regulate the influence of implicit biases on our experiences.⁴⁸ In short, epistemic obligations regarding the formation of experience are common and thus central to doxastic justification.

I mentioned in section II that an argument from special epistemic obligations has the advantage of establishing a *sui generis* impact on perceptual justification. Since irresponsible experience formation is uniquely able to explain Joyce-like cases, it follows that it is irreducible to more familiar influences on perceptual justification, like defeat, reliability, or inferential character. As a result, perceptual responsibilism may undermine the motivation for positing these other influences, at least in certain circumstances. I will consider each in turn.

Many defeaters are non-perceptual and thus unlikely to be explained away by irresponsible experience formation. But many instances of *normative* defeat are perceptual. Gibbons, for example, argues that his belief that there is cream cheese in the fridge is defeated by an unperceived but easily perceivable note from his partner indicating that they have run out.⁴⁹ If we grant that Gibbons's belief is unjustified because he failed to attend to the note, we can ask whether it matters

⁴⁷ Gibbons, "Access Externalism," *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Natalia Washington and Daniel Kelly, "Who's Responsible For This?: Moral Responsibility, Externalism, and Knowledge about Implicit Bias," in Michael Brownstein and Jennifer Saul, eds., *Implicit Bias and Philosophy, Volume 2: Moral Responsibility, Structural Injustice, and Ethics* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 10-36.

⁴⁹ Gibbons, "Access Externalism," *op. cit.*

what is written on it. On Gibbons's telling, the note defeats his belief because, if he had noticed it, he would possess a classical (rebutting) defeater for that belief. It follows that if the note had said something else, unrelated to his belief, then he would remain justified. This is a surprising consequence of normative defeat. But notice that if Gibbons is epistemically obligated to attend to the note, and if he fails to do so, then it follows from perceptual responsibilism that his belief is unjustified, regardless of what the note says. Thus, some purported cases of normative defeat may be better explained by irresponsible experience formation.

What about reliability? In section III.2, I argued that mere reliability cannot explain the Joyce cases. Since perceptual responsibilism can, it follows that responsibility does not reduce to a simple reliability consideration. But I also argued that a version of reliabilism — according to which S's belief in P is unjustified if there is a more reliable process that S could have employed which also results in a belief whether P — can explain Joyce-like cases. Might perceptual responsibilism reduce to this more complex reliabilism?

To answer this question, recall that defenders of the ARP principle, on which this proposed reliabilist theory is based, explicitly reject it.⁵⁰ The reason, as explained by Goldman, is that if the ARP principle is left unbounded, such that it includes in the scope of 'alternative' processes ones like attending differently to the perceptible scene, then ARP appears to overgenerate defeaters, admitting implausibly few justified beliefs.⁵¹ The lesson is that any version of reliabilism which employs the ARP principle must also have a principle that limits the range of alternative processes considered when assessing *ultima facie* justification. And that principle must track the known normative facts. It must, for example, explain why Joyce, but not the novice, 'has available' the process involving application of the rule. But if the conclusion of this paper is correct, then ARP

⁵⁰ Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?" *op. cit.*; Lyons, "Perception and basic beliefs," *op. cit.*

⁵¹*Ibid*, p. 20.

can track such normative facts only if it is constrained by a subject's epistemic responsibilities. Thus, not only is perceptual responsibility *not* reducible to reliabilism, any plausible reliabilism, in fact, depends on it.

The idea that there must be some such supplemental principle is familiar within the recent reliabilist literature. Most notably, Goldberg has developed a version of reliabilism according to which *ultima facie* doxastic justification is constrained by both reliability and responsibility conditions.⁵² To my knowledge, his is the closest extant view to the one just articulated. His responsibility condition, however, is intended as an account of defeat (both classical and normative) and has the same problematic constraint as Goldman's original version of ARP. Specifically, he proposes that

“a failure to live up to one's social epistemic responsibilities defeats the *prima facie* epistemic propriety of one's belief that *p* when and only when the satisfaction of one's social epistemic responsibilities would have resulted in a belief that fails to be *prima facie* epistemically proper.”⁵³

This is to say that one's epistemic responsibilities can undermine justification only when fulfilling those responsibilities would have resulted in a justified doxastic state which conflicts with the one presently held. Thus, this version of the responsibility condition, like previous versions of ARP, cannot explain the Joyce cases. And it has the same problem, just articulated, as other accounts of normative defeat: it maintains that irresponsibly ignoring evidence impacts justification only if that

⁵² Goldberg, *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, *op. cit.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

evidence would constitute a classical defeater for our belief.⁵⁴ Thus, reliabilist theories must go further to accommodate the insights of perceptual responsibilism.

Finally, consider the purported inferential character of perception.⁵⁵ I argued in section III.3 that Joyce's unjustified belief cannot be explained by an irrational inference from his outlook to either his experience or attention. It follows that responsible experience formation is irreducible to inferential character. However, inferential character *could* reduce to responsible experience formation if, as some 'deontologists' about doxastic justification argue, rational inference is an instance of responsible belief formation.⁵⁶ If so, then rational *experience* formation may also be a special case of responsible experience formation.

More strongly, however, perceptual responsibilism may offer a better explanation of at least some of the cases that motivate Siegel's account. Vivek, for example, may have a general or special obligation to attend to evidence of his sulking guest, including by controlling any influence of his overconfidence. If so, then if he fails to attend in this way, his experience is formed irresponsibly, even if it is not formed inferentially. As reviewed above, this explanation makes fewer controversial commitments than Siegel's and thus is plausibly preferable.

Finally, accommodating perceptual responsibilism may require revision to the general *structure* of doxastic justification. On a widely accepted picture, (a) a belief is doxastically justified when it is properly based on propositional justification, where (b) a belief is 'properly based' on some set of

⁵⁴ Of course, Goldberg disagrees that this is a problem for his view. In *Ibid*, section 6.8, he argues at some length against the 'temptation' to think that irresponsibly ignoring evidence that does not actually defeat one's belief should negatively impact doxastic justification. A full response is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will note that I share his intuitions in the PARTY case — which he uses to motivate rejection of this 'temptation' — because I do not think it is one in which the subject is epistemically obligated to have the relevant evidence (and thus is not irresponsible in ignoring it). So I do not think is a good test case for deciding whether we should resist the 'temptation.'

⁵⁵ Siegel, *The Rationality of Perception*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ For example, Ye, "Higher-order Defeat and Intellectual Responsibility," *op. cit.*

reasons, approximately, when one has the belief *because* one takes those reasons to support it. For a flavor of its generality, notice that classical version of both foundationalism and coherentism accept this picture, differing only in the logical relationship between reasons required for propositional justification and, perhaps, in the precise nature of the basing relation.

Perceptual responsibilism is inconsistent with this picture. Responsible experience formation is clearly not a component of propositional justification. Thus, by (a), if it impacts doxastic justification, it must be required for proper basing. But the conception of proper basing outlined in (b) clearly does not include responsible experience formation. Consider the case, mentioned in section I, in which Joyce irresponsibly (but luckily) forms an apt experience resulting in a true belief. In these circumstances, Joyce may properly base his belief on the relevant set of reasons (including the appropriate features of the perceptible scene), while remaining unjustified in his belief.

Given the popularity of (a), one may try to accommodate perceptual responsibilism by redefining ‘proper basing’ to include taking certain actions when acquiring perceptual evidence. But this would stretch the term beyond its intended use. Basing concerns the role that a reason plays in determining belief, not the role that prior actions play in determining which reasons are available to the subject. Perceptual responsibilism, then, suggests that doxastic justification is a significantly *diachronic* affair, not just about how one’s reasons relate to one’s beliefs, but also about how one has comported oneself to enhance sensitivity to the right set of reasons. Acceptance of this point requires substantial revision of extant conceptions of doxastic justification.

In summary, epistemic obligations regarding experience formation exist throughout our epistemic lives. Consequently, perceptual responsibilism may better explain cases otherwise attributed to defeat, reliability, or inference, constraining their theorizing. Finally, perceptual responsibilism is

inconsistent with a widely accepted claim about the structure of doxastic justification, suggesting instead a broadly diachronic picture of doxastic justification.