

# The good, the bad, and the naive

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Die Übereinstimmung, Harmonie, von Gedanke und Wirklichkeit liegt darin, daß, wenn ich fälschlich sage, etwas sei *rot*, es doch immerhin nicht *rot* ist. Und wenn ich jemandem das Wort "rot" im Satze "Das ist nicht rot" erklären will, ich dazu auf etwas Rotes zeige.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, § 429

Ein Wort ohne Rechtfertigung gebrauchen, heißt nicht, es zu Unrecht gebrauchen.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, § 289<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

A perceptual realism that is naive in a good way must be naively realistic about world and mind. But contemporary self-described naive realists often have trouble acknowledging that both the good cases of successful perception and the bad cases of illusion and hallucination involve internal experiential states with intentional contents that present the world as being a certain way. They prefer to think about experience solely in relational terms because they worry that otherwise we won't be able to escape from radical skepticism. I argue that experiential *relations* to objects require that their subjects be in internal experiential *states*. But this does not mean that these states are our epistemological starting point which can be known independently of any knowledge of the external world. We do escape the epistemological predicament of radical skepticism because the good cases are primary over the bad ones. But this is not because the good cases alone provide reasons for belief, but because we do *not* need a reason to think we are in a good case, but do need a reason to think we are not, and such a reason must come from a good case. So bad cases can only be thought of as deviations from good cases. And we can only understand experiences as states with contents distinct from their objects and present in good and bad cases once we understand misrepresentation, that is, bad cases, and therefore only as we ascribe knowledge of the external world to ourselves.

**Keywords:** perception, naïve realism, intentionalism, externalism, skepticism

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Anscombe translated these as follows: "The agreement, the harmony, of thought and reality consists in this: if I say falsely that something is *red*, then, for all that, it isn't *red*. And when I want to explain the word "red" to someone, in the sentence "That is not red", I do it by pointing to something red." and "To use a word without justification does not mean to use it without right." (Wittgenstein 1958).

## **1. Introduction**

We directly perceptually experience objects – things, properties, states of affairs. That is, for example, I see a table, I see its white color, and I see that it is white. That I perceive these objects directly means that I do not first experience something else – ideas, sense data, or the like – directly and then the table only indirectly. But which objects I experience depends not only on the state of the world external to me, but on my subjective, internal, experiential state. It depends on how the world seems to me to be. That is, it depends on the content of my experience – how it presents the world as being – and on whether that content matches how the world really is. Usually it does. Illusion or hallucination are much rarer than one might suspect from the outsize attention philosophers have given to them, but when such misexperiences do occur, they are cases of contents without corresponding objects.

This is a naively realistic view of perception which seems like mere common sense to me, except perhaps that I used the slightly technical notion of content. Its distinctive feature on the contemporary theoretical scene is that it is naively realistic about world *and* mind. This is worth noting because the label ‘naive realism’ has recently been appropriated by views which seem less than naively realistic about the mind. Such views emphasize experiential relations between subject and world, but are shy about acknowledging that such relations can only obtain in virtue of a subject’s inner experiential and intentionally contentful states. But why would anybody feel a tension between embracing experiential relations and experiential subjective states if – approaching things naively – it seems obvious that the former could not exist without the latter? I believe that in order to understand this and make progress on the issue of perceptual realism we need to engage in a Wittgensteinian diagnosis and therapy of the underlying concerns.

In this spirit, I will provide a very brief and schematic history and diagnosis of some of these concerns in the next section. In the third section, I will more precisely characterize the views I am criticizing as forms of “austere relationism”. The fourth section will provide a blueprint of the positive view to be defended, the fifth will address some concerns about the central notion of content, and the sixth the deep epistemological worries underlying the reluctance to acknowledge experience as an inner state, before I outline the positive alternative in the final seventh section.

## **2. Subjectivism vs. objectivism**

At least since Rene Descartes, philosophy has been torn between subjectivism and objectivism. Descartes made mind the starting point of philosophy and created a chasm between mind and world. While Descartes himself believed that this chasm could still be bridged in a realistic fashion, idealism and other forms of subjectivism despaired of this task and instead tried to overcome this chasm by making world dependent on mind or constructing world out of mind. For subjectivism mind is metaphysically and epistemologically primary. For example, phenomenologists tried to construct ordinary

objects out of sense data. Epistemologically, for the subjectivist ideas, *sensa*, sense data etc. become the immediate objects of experience and thus block direct access to the world. This also brings with it a view of our awareness of our own mental states that seems badly naive: the awareness of ideas is immediate and independent of any knowledge of the world. Experience is the epistemological starting point that supposedly can be made sense of independently of whether we actually succeed in representing the world. Consequently, this success becomes very problematic.

Subjectivism dominated philosophy for a long time, but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers increasingly felt this was intolerable. There was a strong reaction against subjectivism and objectivist viewpoints became more and more influential. For objectivism world is metaphysically and epistemologically primary. Mind is dependent on world or can be constructed out of world. For example, behaviorists construed mental states out of behavior. Moving closer to our present concerns, content externalists hold that mental content may be determined through features of the world – e.g. whether the stuff from lakes and rivers that they drink is H<sub>2</sub>O or XYZ (Putnam 1975) – that subjects are unaware of – at least in any ordinary sense. On the content externalist view, world is partly constitutive of what subjects mean and think in the sense that *features unknown to them can determine it*. This externalism was then sometimes invoked to respond to epistemological concerns. Even if we are brains in a vat – in the scenario that updated Descartes' demon thought experiment – might not most of our beliefs still be true because our words and thoughts refer to the regular causes of our experiences (Putnam 1981)? The price for accepting this response to skepticism is that intuitively these causes – the electrical stimuli controlled by the evil neuroscientists – are rather different from what they appear to be.

Externalism is still orthodox in contemporary philosophy. But one of its most perceptive critics, Donald Davidson, already gave a compelling diagnosis of its shortcomings very early: it provides no more than a “transposed image of Cartesian skepticism” (Davidson 2001: 22). Davidson's point was that now the subject loses its grip on its own mental states. But not even our conception of the relation between these mental states and the world has really improved. The subject is still just as out of touch with the world as on the subjectivist picture. The illusion that something has improved substantially arises only because objectivism invites us to take an external, 3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view on the situation. By adopting this point of view we can see what the person really refers to or what their beliefs are really about (compare Searle 1983: 230). But this external determination is revealed as cold comfort when we take up the point of view of the subject. From the point of view of the subject, the relevant features remain unknown. The abyss between mind and world persists: only apparent progress has been made by declaring ostensibly unknown features of the world to be constitutive of mind.

### **3. What is “austere relationism”?**

Against this historical background let me now characterize more closely what I think is a

bad kind of naive realism, the kind of view that Susanna Schellenberg (2011) has aptly called “austere relationism”. According to austere relationism, the good cases (of successful perception) and the bad cases (of illusion and hallucination) are not of the same kind, or at least not of the same *fundamental* kind. Nor do the good and the bad cases share the property of having intentional content. Austere relationism is a form of disjunctivism. Introspectively, I can only say that my current state is *either* a perceptual experience (relationally conceived), *or* an illusion or hallucination. I cannot say that there is a common factor here, namely that they all involve (non-relational) experiences with intentional content that presents the world as being a certain way. This is what makes this relationism austere.

Austere relationists certainly deny that perceptual experience is representational and has intentional content, but is their relationism so austere that it rejects experience as an internal subjective state in any sense at all? I don’t want to make such an accusation lightly and I am not sure about all philosophers who have held views in this ballpark of ideas, but certain things that its proponents have said (and have not said) are hard to make sense of otherwise. For example, one frequently finds in this literature claims like that features of the external world constitute the phenomenal character of experience (e.g. Campbell 2002: 116). For example, the redness of the table constitutes the phenomenal character of an experience of redness. Since the notion of phenomenal character was explicitly introduced to capture the *what it is like* of a state, that which makes it the state of consciousness that it is, it is hard to see how this move could not be intended to replace any notion of inherent subjective properties of perceptual consciousness. Nor is it intelligible how an internal state of such consciousness could even exist while lacking any inherent phenomenal properties.

A further piece of evidence: when austere relationists do acknowledge the obvious fact that there must be internal enabling conditions for experiential relations to objects – that whether such relations obtain cannot only depend on the state of the world around the organism, but must also depend on the state of the organism itself – they only characterize these conditions in physiological terms (Fish 2009), or in terms of “cognitive processing” (Campbell 2002: 118), but not in experiential terms. But again: if we want to make sense of the experiential perceptual relation, we need an internal, subjective experiential state. When I experience the table, when I am perceptually conscious of it, it is only me that has an experience or is in a state of experience or consciousness. The table does not experience anything and is not part of my experiential state, but just its object. Only my subjective experiential state can turn my relation to it into an experiential relation.

Therefore, neither subjectivism nor objectivism can make sense of the perceptual relation. Subjectivism internalizes it as a relation between subjects and subjective items such as ideas or sense data. It therefore fails to make epistemological sense of perceptual relatedness to external objects, and it is easy to see why this must be so: if we can make sense of experience independently of any awareness of the external world, how could it

ground such awareness? The only escape then is to try to construct world out of mind. Conversely, as we have seen, austere relationism cannot make sense of the experiential perceptual relation because it finds itself unable to acknowledge internal subjective experiential states, which alone can turn this relation into an experiential relation. The only escape then is to try to construct mind out of world, e.g. to claim that external objects constitute the phenomenal character of experience.

I believe that a central motivation for this and other kinds of externalism is epistemological even when these views are not expressly presented as epistemological. Putnam justified his version of content externalism mostly by appeal to semantic intuitions. But a broader motivation was surely to escape subjectivism and to bring the world (and our fellow creatures) into our theories of meaning and thought. And as we saw, Putnam soon tried to make epistemological hay out of content externalism. Similarly, a core motivation for austere relationism is certainly the idea that only experience as construed relationally could adequately ground our knowledge of the world and defeat skepticism. And properly understood, these motivations are quite valid. As I argued, the problem is just that the externalist proposals reproduce the precarious, broadly Cartesian, character of the relation between mind and world and merely invert its description. In either case, the mind appears unable to distinguish e.g. between whether this is H<sub>2</sub>O or XYZ in its environment; whether it is experiencing a red table or merely the electrical stimulations generated by the evil neuroscientist; whether it is experiencing anything real at all, or just undergoing an illusion or hallucination. The subjectivist responds by making world dependent on mind, the objectivist by making mind dependent on world.

#### **4. How to be a naive realist about mind and world**

The blueprint for a better response, for a view that genuinely overcomes the Cartesian predicament rather than just inverting it, can be taken from the Wittgenstein quote that I used as one of the epigraphs for this paper (PI, § 429). Wittgenstein talks about thought and negation, but his point equally applies to experience and mere seeming. We can rephrase it as follows: when I undergo an illusion or hallucination of redness, the redness that is not there, that merely appears to be there, is still inextricably tied to the real redness that I experience in successful perception. I cannot explain – not even to myself – what it is that I appeared to be perceiving without pointing to a real instance of redness. (In some cases, the connection might be more indirect, but the basic point still holds.) In this way, mind and world are not married by force, as it were, from an external point of view, by making mind dependent on a feature whose presence or absence it cannot detect, but by arguing that misrepresentation can only be conceived in relation to and as a deviation from cases of successful representation. Far from opening up an unbridgeable chasm between mind and world, misrepresentation presupposes successful representation.

The notion of content is also tied into this nexus. Experiential states are internal states

of the organism and their content is an inherent feature of these states. But content can only be understood in relation to external objects. That is why the fact that something visually seems to be red (square) – that there is a visual content presenting redness (squareness) – can only be understood in relation to things that are really red (square). The subject can only fully distinguish content from object by understanding the bad cases of misrepresentation, by distinguishing appearance from reality, by being able to think something like: it seems visually to me to be red, but it is not really red. And again, bad cases can only be understood in relation to good ones.

This means that there is a sense in which on the view to be developed, perceptual experiential relations are prior to mere experiential states. In this regard the view is a relational account. But it's not an austere relationism because it insists that both the good and the bad cases must involve experiential subjective states with intentional content. So like several recent authors (Dorsch 2010; Schellenberg 2011; McDowell 2013) I try to find a synthesis between intentionalism and relationism (and internalism and externalism). Accordingly, this view can be called "relational intentionalism".

Let me state its main tenets as explicitly as possible. There are experiential *relations* – which can be reported by sentences such as "I experienced the monitor in front of me". But these relations obtain partly in virtue of experiential *states* of the subject – states that can be reported by sentences such as "I had an experience as of a monitor in front of me". We conceptually focus on experiential relations with factive reports, which entail representational success and on experiential states with neutral reports such as "It visually seemed to me that there was a monitor in front of me", or with counterfactive reports such as "I hallucinated a monitor in front of me". States are present in bad and good cases, relations only in good ones. Experiential states are internal and subjective states of the organism that have intentional content that determines conditions of satisfaction.

The main task of this paper will be to explain the sense in which experiential relations and good cases are primary relative to bad cases and mere experiences / states and thus to address the epistemological worries which are the main force driving austere relationism. But before I come to this, it will be useful to address some of the main misunderstandings and concerns with regard to the notion of content.

## **5. Some concerns about content**

The most tempting mistake about content is to think that it is somehow 'between' mind and world, such that a subject would first refer to content and then only indirectly – if at all – to the world. To think about content in this way is to turn it into some kind of epistemic intermediary between mind and world like a sense datum. But content is not between mind and world at all. Content talk just refers to the way the experience is with regard to its intentional significance. We are not aware of content at the level of experience at all – but only of objects and of ourselves. Only at the level of reflection do we become aware of content as distinct from object. Content is subjective and what

makes it the case that we are aware of certain objects but not others. For example, right now I experience the computer screen in front of me, but if the content of my experience were different, I would be aware of different objects, or none at all, even if all the external facts were the same.

Content is therefore also needed to make sense of the good cases. It is important to emphasize this, since we tend to focus on the bad cases when thinking about content, as then the absence of relevant objects makes content more conspicuous. But content is also required to make sense of the bad cases: *these can only be bad relative to conditions of satisfaction set by content*. Experience (as a state) can only misrepresent or mispresent when it presents the world as being a certain way. That is just what it means to have content. If we deny content in this sense, we make a mockery of the bad cases which are essentially cases where things seem to be a certain way which they are not. For any hallucination or illusion, for any experience, there must always be an answer to the question: how did things seem to the subject, how did it experience them as being?

For the same reason, experience cannot be “object-dependent” and content cannot be “gappy” in the way that has sometimes been suggested in the literature (e.g. Schellenberg, 2011). The idea of gappy content is the idea that, for example, there is a gap or hole in the content of hallucination corresponding to the hallucinated object. But the notion of gappy content has things back to front. The gap or hole is actually in the world and can only exist relative to conditions of satisfaction set by content. Only because the experience requires the presence of an object in order to be veridical, does its absence turn it into a hallucination. If there were really a gap in content there, content would not require the presence of the object and there would be no hallucination.

The idea that some content is object-dependent is a residue of externalist objectivism. It makes mind locally dependent on world. It is certainly no accident that it does so where particular things are concerned. In the philosophical imagination, particulars have long stood out as paradigms of reality. There is a direct line from Russell’s suggestion that particulars might actually be constituents of propositions to the theory of gappy content. This kind of mindset is also reflected in the importance that has often been given to the distinction between illusion and hallucination and in the closely related idea that content must be completely general and thus cannot account for reference to particulars. Before I discuss this idea, let me define a minimal notion of content.

On a minimal construal, content is first and foremost the property of internal states that sets conditions of satisfaction. Nothing can be the object of such an intentional state except by matching its content. That is, an entity could not determine itself, so to speak, to be the object of an intentional state, but could only be that relative to content. And conversely, the world can also only fail to satisfy a state because that state has content. The minimal notion is meant to formulate a bare realism about intentionality and content. But intentionalism is often rejected because a stronger notion of content is implicitly or explicitly assumed. I will now discuss some of these additional commitments often associated with intentionalism, beginning with the notion that content must be

completely general or descriptive.

This understanding of content still tends to be taken for granted. It is not only manifest in the theory of gappy contents, but also in the common presupposition that content could not be irreducibly indexical – for example, in Putnam’s (1975) classic argument for externalism (compare Searle 1983: ch. 8). So let us consider a twin earth scenario here. Does my experience present my computer screen and myself in completely general terms? Does it say something like “There is a screen there with certain features and it is in front of somebody with certain features”, so that this descriptive content might apply just as much to my twin on twin earth as it does to me? Now, my experience of course does not really say anything, nor does it really present anything in general terms or concepts – because its content is not conceptual at all – nor even in indexical, demonstrative terms – because it is not in any way linguistic. Still it seems clear that its content is more akin to demonstrative content. It is certainly no accident that demonstrative expressions have generally been thought to more immediately latch onto perception than other expressions. Therefore I believe we can say that the content of my experience is more akin to something like “*This* screen in front of *me*...”. It does not pick out anything – whatever it may be – that meets a certain description, but this particular screen in front of this particular creature. More could be said about this, but in the present context this should suffice to shift the burden of proof to those who assume that perceptual content must be general or descriptive. One can be an intentionalist about perception without being a descriptivist.

Historically, the notion of content originated in the context of thought about that-clauses, propositions, concepts and other linguistic or quasi-linguistic items, and this has often led to content being identified with propositional and conceptual content. This in turn is why some philosophers reject the application of the notion of content to perceptual experience (or, generally to ‘basic minds’), because they rightly feel that it cannot be understood in language-centric terms (e.g. Hutto & Myin 2012). But I think the proper response is just to reject the language-centric notion and embrace content that is non-propositional and non-conceptual. I find it hard to understand what intentionality without content might even be, because, again, what should bring a state in intentional contact with certain objects – but not others – and how could there be a perceptual experience, where there is no answer to the question *what* was experienced, how the world seemed to its subject?

Similar remarks also apply to the austere relationist attempt to replace all talk of content with talk of the phenomenal character of experience. Even setting aside the already discussed problem that this character is supposed to be constituted by external objects, it is not clear how this attempt could succeed. The suggestion can hardly be that the phenomenal features of perceptual experience are non-representational in the sense in which e.g. mood experience is arguably non-representational, or in the sense which on some conceptions sensations are non-representational. This would seem to be inconsistent with the insistence that experience “brings our surroundings into view”

(Travis, 2004, p. 64) and can justify beliefs about it, which is absolutely central to relationism. But then in which sense is experience supposed to be non-representational – where the representational includes the presentational? Perceptual experience has all the marks of being intentional or representational: it is *about* certain features of the world, its subject is *directed* at these. It is hard to understand what the relationist is driving at here, unless we take her to reject any notion of experience as an internal state, and / or to use a notion of content that is linguistic by definition.

Having addressed some confusions about content, we are now in a position to confront the epistemological worries driving austere relationism.

## **6. The epistemological worry driving austere relationism**

I believe the central worry driving austere relationism might be put as follows. If we accept the distinction between experiential relations and experiential states and the claim that the states are also present in the bad cases, don't we then have to accept experience in the sense of seeming neutral between the good and the bad cases, as our epistemological starting point? And aren't we then back in the original, Cartesian subjectivist epistemological predicament: things seem to me to be a certain way, but what reason can you give me that they really ever are as they seem? We can call this the "plus predicament": what do we have to add to (non-relational) experience to defeat skepticism? From there, I think one can see the pull of insisting a) that experience is fundamentally relational, and b) that it provides us with reasons, so that we are justified in beliefs based on it – as it guarantees we are in the good case! A) here encapsulates the metaphysical aspect or version of relationism / disjunctivism, and b) its epistemological aspect or version, the idea that being in the good case puts the subject in an epistemologically privileged position. This instantiates the pattern that we already identified in the case of Putnam's content externalism. Broadly metaphysical intuitions are invoked to support an externalist thesis which then is supposed to bring an epistemological payoff. Some may try to get the supposed epistemological advantage even without the metaphysical commitment (e.g. McDowell 2013), showing that the former is really the driving force.

I now want to argue that this reasoning, while tempting, "cheerfully accepts the Cartesian premise, while trying to deny the Cartesian conclusion", as Saul Kripke (1980: 145) put it in commenting on materialist responses to the metaphysical mind-body problem. As John Searle (1992: ch. 1) has shown, the typical materialist accepts the Cartesian conceptual dualistic opposition between mind and body and thus can only avoid the Cartesian conclusion of ontological dualism by construing mind out of world, that is, body. Analogously, the relationist accepts the Cartesian epistemological opposition between mind and world, according to which experience is our epistemological starting point, from which we can raise the question whether we have knowledge of the external world. The only way then to avoid the subjectivist conclusion that we lack any such knowledge is to construe experience and / or the subject's

epistemological position out of world, that is, purely relationally. But the Cartesian starting point is optional.

Before I outline an alternative, let us think about how relationism is supposed to show our epistemological situation in a better light, so that we feel warranted in rejecting skepticism. Of course, we can definitionally tie experience to the good case, but obviously that does not improve our chances of being in the good case. To put it disjunctivist style, we are still faced with the initial disjunction that we are either experiencing something, or undergoing an illusion or hallucination. Nor does thinking of experience as providing reasons help, because we are still not in a better position to know that we possess this reason. Now, it might be objected that I'm missing the point. "Look," somebody might say, "of course relationism cannot improve our chances of being in the good case. The point is just to put us at ease that it is rationally ok to move from experience to belief in the face of skepticism. And only a conception that ties experience to the good case and thinks of it as providing reasons can do this." That the point is to declare experiences to be reasons so that we feel rationally justified in moving from experience to belief highlights how relationism revolves around another broadly Cartesian notion, namely that our response to skepticism should take the form of providing a reason in support of our belief in the external world. Philosophers have suggested many such reasons, but no proposal has seemed convincing. Now the relationist suggests that experience itself could provide reasons. But, as I will now argue, perceptual experience is ill-equipped to provide reasons.

What are reasons? For present purposes, we do not need to take a stance on the extensive, though to my mind largely, if not entirely, verbal debates about whether reasons are states of affairs or mental states (or propositions). I will just insist here that whatever we say, reasons must be tied to reasoning. That is, they must either themselves be intentional attitudes (states or speech acts) that figure in reasoning, or they must stand in some relation to such attitudes such as being their object. A state of affairs such that it is raining could therefore not be a reason independently of any such relation to an intentional state. Now the point is that the move from experience to belief is not reasoning.

Experiential states do not qualify for the roles of reasons or reason-making states because they lack the appropriate propositional and logical structure, as the content of experience is pre-conceptual and non-propositional and does not contain logical operators. Intuitively it also seems clear that the move from experience to belief or assertion based on it is not reasoning. Typically, I will just look at what is in front of me and say or think, for example, that there is a monitor in front of me. No reasoning required. Sometimes I may squint my eyes and take a closer look at what it is that I am dealing with, and this may even be motivated by reasoning. Was this really a mountain lion that I saw? Are its back and sides tawny to light-cinnamon in color and its chest and underside white? Here reasoning directs my perceptual attention, but that does not make the move from experience to belief reasoning. Rational capacities are manifest in

inferring bits of information and weighing them against one another in what Wilfred Sellars called the “space of reasons”. Are there even mountain lions in Austria? Might one have escaped from a nearby zoo? But the move from experience to thought is different in character. We do not need a reason to enter the space of reasons; there couldn’t even be such a reason because to possess it we would already have to be in that space. So experience can’t provide reasons.

The notion that experience itself already involves rational capacities, as John McDowell (e.g. 2013) in particular has long claimed, so that by perceiving something we would already be in the space of reasons, is very implausible. One has to be very much in the grip of a philosophical idea to think that seeing, hearing or touching something is an exercise of rationality. The idea in question here is the idea that we need a reason to believe in the reality of the external world, and, as we saw, the only epistemological advantage the relationist construal of experience might be thought to have is that it allows us to think of experience as providing reasons by tying it to the good case. But given the implausible consequences of this idea, we should consider alternatives.

One alternative is provided by Tyler Burge. Burge (2003) gives similar arguments against the idea that experience provides reasons, but then goes on to distinguish two kinds of warrant: justification, which involves reasons and is accessible to the subject, and entitlement, for which neither is true, and which has to do with things like normal conditions and reliability. So Burge opts for epistemological externalism as against McDowell’s epistemological internalism: “Epistemology must acknowledge elements of warrant that are not conceptually accessible as reasons to the warranted individual if it is to give a tenable account of perceptual belief” (2003: 529). But does the move from experience to belief really need a post hoc 3<sup>rd</sup> person justification from epistemologists, who do reason about these matters, if reasoning about normal conditions, reliability etc. does not and could not play any role for subjects making this move? And given this inaccessibility, in which sense then is entitlement really an epistemological and thus normative status? The natural view is that such a status would have to be in the space of reasons. Moreover, as Burge points out himself (2003: 537), his explication of entitlement does not address skepticism. Nor could it, since a notion of reliability under normal conditions already *presupposes* the reality and knowability of the external world. But then it seems his explication does not really address the most fundamental aspect of the move from experience to belief and the concerns of McDowell and others.

Faced then with the equally implausible alternatives of declaring experience itself and / or the move from experience to belief to be an exercise of rationality, or of dissociating epistemological status from such exercises, I suggest we try out a different perspective.

## **7. An alternative account**

Let us not uncritically accept the Cartesian ideas that we can understand experience independently of any knowledge of the external world and that our response to skepticism should take the form of providing a reason for belief in that world. Regarding

the first point, I propose to take a lesson from developmental psychology. Let us use actual development as an antidote, as part of a bit of Wittgensteinian therapy, against both traditional subjectivism and the objectivist, externalist overreaction to it. Let us accept the false belief test as a criterion for understanding mind and so let us take seriously the finding that experiencing world precedes understanding mind, as the false belief test is passed around four years (classical version), or around one year – if we accept the newer violation of expectation paradigms as revealing genuine belief understanding – but in any case certainly after the infant has been perceptually experiencing the world. The rationale for accepting the false belief test as a criterion for understanding mind is pretty straightforward in the light of our earlier reflections: only if a subject can make a clear distinction between how things are and how they seem, that is, between content and object, can it clearly separate mind and world.

In this way the Cartesian question is turned on its head. We can no longer take experience for granted while asking whether it ever gets the world right, but instead we have to ask how we understand mind and experience on the basis of experiencing world. The role of reasons is also turned on its head. They do not lead us from experience to the corresponding beliefs, but from beliefs to *understanding* experience and mind more generally. We start by perceptually experiencing objects as being related to us (and others) – spatially and also causally (Searle 1983). We stand in intentional and experiential relations to the world and may even have some understanding of them in our own case and that of others, but we don't yet understand that they obtain in virtue of experiential states with contents distinct from their objects. Our understanding is still very primitive – somewhat similar to the deliberate primitivism of austere relationism – and at a level prior to the differentiation of mental and bodily features (Schmitz 2015).

A proper understanding of experience and mental states more broadly begins only when we start making assertions and forming beliefs on the basis of experience and learn to resolve inter- and intraindividual conflicts between attitudes by means of reasoning. In this way, we gradually come to understand misrepresentation by separating appearance and reality, content and object. For example, I come to understand that I mistook a lynx for a mountain lion or that the lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion only seem to differ in length.

How to respond to skepticism? From this perspective, the possibility and actuality of misrepresentation can never lead to skeptical doubt, because to ascribe a misrepresentation we need a reason and such a reason can only come from what (is taken to be) a good case. For maximum clarity, let us spell out this argument as a series of steps:

1. To understand experience we need to understand misrepresentation.
2. To ascribe a misrepresentation (bad case) one needs a reason.
3. This reason can only come from (what is taken to be) a good case.

Conclusion: Bad cases presuppose good cases. Misrepresentation can only be thought of as a deviation from the normal case of successful representation.

For example, I can only ascribe the Müller-Lyer illusion to myself because I take myself to know that the lines are actually of equal length. The same kind of argument also applies to doubt. As Wittgenstein pointed out long ago, doubt also stands in need of reasons (ÜG: 122), and these reasons must also come from good cases. For example, the fact that mountain lions are not native to Austria gives me a reason to doubt that I have seen one.

To use the phenomenon of misrepresentation to try to raise global skeptical doubt is therefore to misuse it. The skeptic overlooks the fact that when I ascribed a misrepresentation to myself or doubted my representational success I presupposed the representational success of what gave me reasons for the ascription or for doubt. Doubt without reasons is not genuine. Not the person who accepts the reality of the external world around her is dogmatic, but the skeptic who doubts it without reasons. This is because believing on the basis of sense experience does not require reasons, while doubting does.

I thus agree with certain relationists as well as with proponents of the factive turn in epistemology that the good cases are primary over the bad cases and that a proper account of perception should help to put skepticism to rest. But on my view the skeptic-defeating primacy of the good case does not consist in that experience only provides reasons in the good case, but in that we do *not* need reasons to think we are in the good case, but that we do to doubt that we are, or to think that we are in the bad case. That is why the bad case can only be thought as a deviation from the primary good case. The skeptical doubt is misplaced and not genuine because, first, the move from experience to belief is not an exercise of rationality and therefore in the basic case does not allow, much less require, justification. And second, once we have acquired the reasoning capacities that put us into the space of reasons, these capacities operate by weighing beliefs against one another and resolving conflicts between them, which is why rejecting, even doubting, one can only be rational on the basis of affirming others. So global skeptical doubt and the attendant demand for justification is either misguided because it is directed at something that is not an exercise of rationality and therefore cannot be questioned as such, or because the relevant exercises of rationality already presuppose that we are in good cases.

At an even more advanced level of reasoning we can also cite the fact that we have perceived something as a special kind of reason – one that specifies the source of a belief. While such reasons involve experience, it is still a “conceptual mistake” (Burge 2003: 529) to think that therefore experiences themselves are reasons: not only because reasons are propositional and for the other reasons discussed already, but also because in experience itself we are not yet aware of experience. Such reasons appeal to the reliability of sources, but any determination of reliability, whether under normal or other conditions, already presupposes the existence and knowability of the external world and therefore cannot have a foundational role in responding to skeptical doubts.

We can now explain the sense in which the experiential perceptual relation is

fundamental. It is fundamental in the sense that the good case as a default is prior in the epistemological order because it does *not* need a reason. At the same time, the experiential perceptual state is fundamental in a different sense, namely ontologically / for purposes of psychological explanation. It is a more basic constituent of the world because it is present in the good as well as in the bad cases. This shows how the present proposal reconciles intentionalism and relationism, or, more broadly, internalism and externalism, and integrates elements of both into the view that I above called “relational intentionalism”. This view is intentionalist in so far as experiential states with intentional contents are taken to be present in the good and the bad cases, and it is internalist insofar as it accepts the obvious fact that these are states of organisms located within them. But it is also relationist. It also accepts the obvious fact that there are experiential relations to external objects, and it holds that these relations are epistemologically primary in the sense that one needs a reason to think that there merely seems to be such a relation. Since misrepresentation can thus only be thought of as a deviation from the normal case of successful representation, and understanding experience – clearly separating mind and world, subject and content – in turn requires understanding misrepresentation, the view is also externalist in the sense that experience and its content cannot be understood independently of reference to the external world. The key insight here is the Kantian insight that our understanding of mind and world are interdependent, transposed into an unmistakably realist framework. This interdependence is not to be confused with the attempt to invert our interpretation of a case where mind and world are out of touch by constructing mind out of world. Once we see that and leave behind the excesses of both subjectivism and objectivism, we can be naive realists about mind and world.<sup>2</sup>

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