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How and Why Knowledge is First [Final Draft]

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[For Adam Carter, Emma Gordon, and Ben Jarvis (ed.), *Knowledge-First Epistemology*. Oxford University Press.]

1. Introduction

It is an extremely common mistake.[1] People think that our beliefs cannot attain any sort of positive epistemic status unless they are based on good reasons.[2] According to the reasons-first approach to epistemic status, reasons and the possession of them are prior to epistemic status.[3] In point of fact, the opposite is true. When you know that something is true, it is true that you have reasons in your possession, but you possess these reasons as a result of coming to know. There is nothing prior to knowing that puts these reasons in your possession. Because of this, the proponents of reasons-first epistemology are mistaken in thinking that the possession of reasons is a necessary precondition for the attainment of status. Thus, there is an important sense in which knowledge comes first. It comes first in the sense that we first come to have reasons in our possession by coming to know that certain things are true. Knowledge is first

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[1] I've benefitted from conversations with Maria Alvarez, Robert Audi, Bill Brewer, Wesley Buckwalter, John Callanan, Adam Carter, Elijah Chudnoff, Chris Cowie, Jonathan Dancy, Christina Dietz, Trent Dougherty, Julien Dutant, Mikkel Gerken, Sandy Goldberg, Ali Hasan, Scott Hagaman, John Hawthorne, Jennifer Hornsby, Robert Howell, Nick Hughes, John Hyman, Maria Lasonen-Aarnio, Dustin Locke, Heather Logue, Errol Lord, Jack Lyons, Brent Madison, Aidan McGlynn, Rachel McKinnon, Jon Matheson, Ram Neta, Duncan Pritchard, Susanna Siegel, Chris Tucker, John Turri, and Tim Williamson. I also want to thank three anonymous referees for their helpful feedback on an earlier draft.

[2] An anonymous referee reminded me that this is often assumed in stating Agrippa's Trilemma. Among the defenders of the view that justification requires the support of reasons/evidence are Comesana (2010), Conee and Feldman (2004), and McDowell (1998). While this view is commonly held, it is not commonly argued for. I have never seen an argument for it. Some authors (e.g., Gibbons (2010)) define 'reason' as something that occupies a certain theoretical role (i.e., that of making things reasonable), but this approach trivializes the claim and conflicts with an approach that thinks that we have some independent grip on the notion of a reason. As I think the claim is non-trivial and think we have an independent grip on the notion, I won't follow his lead.

[3] These reasons are usually understood as evidence. For arguments that a subject's reasons for believing things consists of a subject's (apparent) evidence, see Adler (2002) and Shah (2006). A subject's reason for ϕ-ing is a motivating reason, a special kind of explanatory reason (i.e., a reason why a subject ϕ'd). An important constraint on a theory of motivating reasons is that they can be good reasons to ϕ. See Dancy (2000). For a general discussion of the relationship between reasons of different kinds and the ontology of reasons, see Alvarez (2010) and Littlejohn (forthcoming).

because it is distinctive. There is nothing else that could put us in a position to believe, do, or feel things for reasons.

According to the knowledge-first view defended here, you cannot have a reason in your possession unless it's something you know. Reasons are facts and the possession of them requires knowledge. In defending this view, I shall defend a crucial part of the view that your evidence is all and only what you know (E=K). Much of the literature on E=K has been concerned with questions about whether evidence has to consist of truths, whether it can be inferential, and whether Gettier cases cause trouble for E=K.[4] Defenders of E=K have done a nice job fending off challenges on these fronts, but some issues haven't been explored in sufficient depth.[5] It seems that knowledge requires justified or appropriate belief.[6] If it does, E=K implies that your evidence includes *p* only if you appropriately or justifiably believe *p*. If knowing *p* does require justifiably or appropriately believing *p*, E=K tells us two surprising things about the possession of evidence. The first is that you cannot possess something as evidence unless you *believe* it.[7] This rules out the possibility that your non-inferential beliefs are justified by virtue of being supported by evidence.[8] Some alternative story has to be

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[4] McGlynn (2014) provides a detailed survey and critical discussion of this literature.

[5] The challenges have focused on things like whether evidence can be inferential, whether it must be propositional or factive, whether evidence has to be believed, and whether the externalist implications of E=K are acceptable. For a discussion of whether evidence can be inferential, see Bird (2004) and Neta (2008). For discussion of whether evidence has to be propositional, see Dougherty (2011). For discussion of whether propositional evidence is factive and requires belief, see Littlejohn (2012, forthcoming) and Williamson (2009). For discussion of the externalist implications, see Pritchard (2012).

[6] I'll treat these notions interchangeably. Maria Alvarez has convinced me (whether she intended to or not) that this holds only for mature humans. There are some non-human animals where it seems that they know things but cannot be held accountable in the way that they'd have to be to make sense of the idea that their actions, emotions, or beliefs are justified. On my view, then, the relation between knowledge and justification is akin to the way that utilitarians conceive of the relation between being right and being optimific. A heroic dog might perform optimific actions. It's an open question whether they've acted rightly. They might know that it's time for dinner. It's an open question whether this belief is justified. If this is a good idea, it's probably hers. If it's not, it's probably mine.

[7] This clashes with many of the standard claims about propositional justification (e.g., that it doesn't require belief but does require reasons or evidence). Obviously, I'll have to defend it further below. If you wanted to offer a knowledge-first approach to propositional justification, you could do it in terms of what you're in a position to know, but then you'd have to give up some of the standard views about the relation between propositional justification and basing.

[8] For further defense of the idea that there's nothing that's your reason for believing *p* if your belief is non-inferential, see Littlejohn (forthcoming) and McGinn (2012). One argument for the view that there's nothing that's your reason for believing *p* when that belief is non-inferential uses McDowell's (1979) characterization of a subject's reasons and points out that on this gloss only that which is known independently from believing *p* could be your reason for believing *p*. Readers who want to insist that cases

told about how these beliefs attain positive epistemic standing. The second is that possession has to be understood in *normative* terms. This rules out the possibility that the possession of evidence could play a grounding role, grounding epistemic statuses like justification, rationality, or knowledge.[9] The possession of evidence cannot ground such statuses if the attainment of such statuses is required for a piece of evidence to be in your possession.

Proponents of the traditional reasons-first approach are likely to challenge both the idea that possession itself should be understood in normative terms and the idea that possession requires belief. If they want to challenge these consequences of E=K, they'll need to offer their own answers to these two questions:

> **The Constitution Question:** What do your reasons for believing what you do consist of?
> **The Possession Question:** What does it take to have these reasons?

We'll see that the answers available to the proponents of the reasons-first view aren't very good. The proponents of the reasons-first approach cannot say that our evidence consists of the facts we know, so they turn to perception or perceptual experience to give them an account of constitution or possession. On one version of the view, evidence consists of experiences and having evidence is simply a matter of having these experiences. On another more promising version of the view, evidence consists of facts made manifest in successful perceptual engagement with our surroundings. We'll see that neither approach works. Once we see that, we'll see that knowledge is distinctive and thus must come first in the sense that I've claimed.

Here is my plan of attack. In §2, I shall argue against internalist versions of reasons-first epistemology. Any view that offers acceptable answers to the constitution and possession questions has to explain how it's possible to believe, feel, and do things for reasons that are the facts that we have in mind when we believe, feel, and do things for reasons. Internalist views deny that this is possible, so they cannot explain what needs to be explained. In §3, I shall look at externalist versions of reasons-first epistemology according to which perception provides us with reasons. I shall argue that perception isn't the kind of thing that could provide you with reasons because perceptual contact doesn't put you in a position to be guided by reasons that consist of

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of non-inferential belief are cases in which there's something that's your reason for believing what you do are free to introduce their own conception of a subject's reasons, but the standard glosses on it don't allow for non-inferential beliefs to be based on reasons. A simple point that's often neglected is that Unger's (1975) argument that all propositionally specified reasons have to be known to be a subject's reasons holds true for all the relevant verbs, even those used to talk about beliefs that aren't formed through inference. For further arguments for the knowledge requirement, see Hornsby (2007, 2008) and Hyman (1999).

[9] Conee and Feldman (2004) are the leading proponents of the view that evidence does play this grounding role. Littlejohn (2012, forthcoming) and Sylvan and Sosa (forthcoming) criticize their evidentialist view on the grounds that the possession of evidence has to be understood in normative terms, although they disagree about what is involved in possession. Beddor (forthcoming) criticizes their grounding claim on the grounds that they use normative notions to identify the theoretical role that evidence occupies.

facts. In §4, I shall conclude with an argument for a knowledge-first account of justification.

2. Internalism

In this section, we'll look at some views that combine the reasons-first approach to epistemic status with this supervenience thesis:

> Internalism: Necessarily, if two subjects are in the same non-factive mental states, these subjects have the very same evidence.[10]

According to the internalists, it's not possible for you to have evidence that your systematically deceived counterparts don't have. If you and your counterparts' both ϕ and your mental states stand in the same causal relations, you'll ϕ for the very same reasons. According to some internalists, this is part of the intuitive motivation for the view.[11] Many internalists think that it's intuitively obvious that (a) any reasons that your deceived counterpart has you'll have and (b) any reasons that you have will be reasons that your deceived counterpart has. If there cannot be any difference in justificatory status without a difference in possessed reasons or evidence, the (purported) fact that these internal duplicates share the same reasons is supposed to explain why these subjects' beliefs are equally justified.

To flesh out the details of this internalist view, internalists have to say something about the constitution and possession of reasons. Internalism doesn't answer these questions directly. It only tells us that facts about such reasons (including facts about what's in your box of evidence) supervene upon your non-factive mental states. This doesn't tell us whether a subject's evidence consists of mental states or events (statism), the contents of those states or events (propositionalism), or facts (factualism), but we'll see that once we see what reasons are and what's sufficient for their possession that the internalists are mistaken.[12]

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[10] This is mentalism about *evidence*, but not (necessarily) about justification. Mentalists often say that propositional justification supervenes upon a subject's evidence, but we'll see below that there are some reasons to think that this is not a helpful way to think about things. See Littlejohn (forthcoming b) for an attack on the idea that justification could be understood in terms of strong evidential support.

[11] See Cohen (1984), Madison (2014), and Silins (2005) for a defense.

[12] For defenses of the statist view, see Brueckner (2009), Cohen (1984), Conee and Feldman (2008), Dougherty and Rysiew (2013), Gibbons (2010), Haack (2009), Lyons (2009), McCain (2014), Mitova (forthcoming), and Turri (2009). For defenses of propositionalism, see Dougherty (2011), Fantl and McGrath (2009), Miller (2008), and Schroeder (2008, 2011). For defenses of factualism, see Alvarez (2010), Hornsby (2007, 2008), Hyman (1999), Littlejohn (2012), Unger (1975), and Williamson (2000). Most participants to this debate aren't terribly concerned about the relationship between propositions and facts and are happy to say that they think of true propositions as facts. Thus, the crucial difference between the propositionalist and factualist view is on whether *p*'s being a reason depends, in part, upon whether *p* is true. Because of this difference, I take the propositionalist approach to be unacceptable. Here's a quick argument. If your reason for ϕ-ing was that *p*, you ϕ'd because *p*. (If it's not true that you ϕ'd because *p*, the claim that your reason for ϕ-ing was that *p* would be mistaken.)

Many internalists now identify a subject's evidence or a subject's reasons for her beliefs with states of mind. On this approach, having a reason or a piece of evidence is simply a matter of having an attitude or an experience. A proponent of reasons-first epistemology needs an account of possession that doesn't require a belief that attains positive standing to possess a reason and this approach would seem to meet this constraint.

While Davidson (2001: 141) defended the view that only *beliefs* could be reasons for belief, most statist internalists defend the view that *experiences* constitute our reasons for belief. Consider, for example, Dougherty and Rysiew's experience-first view.[13] As they see it, experience is "first ... in the order of immediacy: in short, experience is where we begin" (2013: 17). Elaborating on this theme, they say:

> This is where experience is first: in the quest for true belief, justification, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom we have no other starting point than experience. Our experiences ... are our basic evidence, in the light of which all else that is evident is made evident. Experiences play well the roles that characterize evidence (2013: 17).

And later:

> Any chain of cited evidence must end with the way the world appears to us to be. So on this view, experience is first in that it inhabits the ground floor of the intellectual evidence (2013: 18).

Is this right? Does our ultimate evidence consist of experiences?

Davidson thought not. It's instructive to consider his argument. Davidson (2001: 141) argued that the only thing that could be a reason for a belief would be another belief on the grounds that only that which stands in a logical relation to a belief could serve as a reason for it. When it comes to belief, nothing could be a reason to believe *p* unless it stood in some sort of logical relation to *p*. Relatedly, nothing could function in reasoning as *my reason* to believe *p* unless it was something I took to stand in a logical relation to *p*. If I don't take there to be some logical connection between *p* and *q*, *q* cannot be what convinced me that *p* by settling the question whether *p*. As such, it's hard to see how it could be my reason.

A standard statist response is to say that experiences can stand in logical relations because of their contents. This is a muddle. It's a muddle because this assumes that if experiences were like beliefs in having content, they could be like beliefs in being reasons. Alas. Beliefs aren't reasons. As such, arguing that experiences are like beliefs isn't a particularly good strategy for showing that experiences are

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The sentences 'You fell because the floor was slippery', 'The chocolate melted because the radiator was on', and 'You went to the store because you were out of gin' are true only if the floor was slippery, the radiator was on, and you were out of gin. I won't discuss the propositionalist view further here as I have yet to see any response to this argument.

[13] Experience-first can be understood as a version of the reasons-first view. That's how I'll understand it here. The experience-first view can be understood as a view on which a subject's evidence consists of experiences, but it can be understood to include views like McDowell's on which reasons are facts that are made manifest in experience.

reasons. It's a good strategy for showing that they cannot be reasons. Neither beliefs nor experiences stand in logical relations. Experiences are events. They are datable, coarse-grained particulars. Datable occurrences and coarse-grained particulars don't themselves stand in logical relations or constrain rational degrees of belief. They don't entail anything. They aren't entailed by anything. (Events lack truth-values.) If experiences had contents (more on this below), their *contents* might stand in logical relations, but as experiences aren't their contents, it doesn't follow from the fact that contents stand in logical relations that experiences do. Your reasons for feeling, doing, or believing things are things that can figure in reasoning. What figures in reasoning as things that you reason from (i.e., reasons) are things that are propositional (i.e., facts or propositions), not things that have contents that are propositional (i.e., states of mind).

Properly understood, Davidson's logical relations argument rules out both his view that identifies epistemic reasons with beliefs and any version of the experience-first view that identifies epistemic reasons with experiences. What Davidson's argument shows is that reasons have to be propositions or facts, the things that we have *in mind* when we believe, feel, or do things for reasons, not things *in the head* when we believe, feel, or do things for reasons. Our reasons for believing, feeling, and doing things couldn't be things in the head because (a) our reasons for believing, feeling, and doing things are things that we take to merit or make appropriate these responses and (b) we all know full well that such things are the things we have in mind, not the states of mind themselves.[14]

Consider the case of emotion. There is a reason why Agnes is upset and then there is Agnes' reason for being upset with the neighbors upstairs. When we use the possessive construction to talk about Agnes' reasons (i.e., motivating reasons), we're interested in reasons that help us see what it was from Agnes' point of view that was so upsetting. This has to be something that helps us to understand why, from her perspective, it makes sense to be upset or why it's appropriate to be upset with the neighbors upstairs. If you saw things as she did, it would be something like the fact that they make so much noise and sign for your packages without ever bringing them down. For this reason, a motivating reason has to be something Agnes is cognizant of and so there are epistemic constraints on the proper ascription of motivating reasons.[15] To be Agnes' reason for being upset with the neighbors upstairs, something has to be such that Agnes is both cognizant of and averse to. It has to be something that Agnes wants not to be.[16]

If we follow the statists lead in identifying Agnes' reasons for believing things with states of mind, we'd have to identify Agnes' reasons for feeling things with those same states of mind. It's possible to believe something for the very same reason that you feel something. If Agnes heads upstairs to confront her neighbors, her reason for

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[14] Following Dancy (2000) we should say that a subject's reasons are the kinds of things that can be good reasons since it's possible to ϕ for a reason that's a good reason to ϕ. Since the good reasons there are to ϕ are facts, not states of mind or their false contents, Dancy's constraint supports the view that reasons are facts.

[15] This doesn't hold for all explanatory reasons, mind you. If you are deceived by a demon, that's one reason why you'd think that you had hands. It's not *your reason* for thinking you have hands!

[16] See Gordon (1987) for discussion.

believing that she should go confront them could be her reason for heading upstairs and her reason for being upset with the neighbors upstairs. There's no good statist candidate to play the role of Agnes' reason for being upset with her neighbors, so there's no good statist candidate to play the role of Agnes' reason for believing that she should go complain.

Remember that Agnes' reason for being upset is something that she desires not to be the case. Maybe she believes that the neighbors upstairs signed for one of her packages and are conspiring to keep it. She wants her wine and so wants them not to keep it. She doesn't want not to believe that the neighbors are holding onto her wine. Her anger has to do with their actions, not her attitudes. The reason that this is trouble for the statist is that the statist has to identify all of a subject's reasons with that subject's attitudes and that's just a deeply implausible account of what Agnes' reason is for being upset with her neighbors. Once we see that, it's easy to see that statism is a deeply implausible account of what Agnes' reason is for believing that she should go complain. It's also a deeply implausible account of what her reason is for heading upstairs to demand the return of her package.

Agnes' reasons are facts about the situation. They are the facts that she has in mind when she believes things, feels things, or does things for reasons. Agnes isn't different from us. Her reasons are the kinds of things that our reasons are. The trouble with internalism as defined above is that it conflicts with the idea that Agnes' reason for being upset could have been something that the neighbors have done or are doing. Notice that if Agnes' reason for being upset with the neighbors didn't merit this kind of affective response, her emotional response wouldn't be fitting. If, say, the package she saw being carried upstairs belonged to them, she might be angry with the neighbors, but her being angry with *them* wouldn't be fitting. A fitting emotional response requires that a subject's reason for having that emotional response is the fact that *merits* that response. Any view that implies, as internalism and statism do, that a subject's reason for her emotional responses *couldn't* be the facts that merit such a response imply that fitting emotional responses are impossible. Let's add this to the long list of reasons for rejecting this approach to reasons.[17]

I've argued that it would be a mistake to follow the statists and the internalists in characterizing a subject's reasons as consisting of states of mind or experiences. A subject's reasons for believing, feeling, and doing things will be facts about the situation that she has in mind and the proponents of reasons-first or experience-first epistemology have to explain how this is possible.

3. Externalism

Any view that gives us acceptable answers to the constitution and possession questions has to accommodate the idea that it's possible to believe, feel, and do things for reasons that consist of the facts you have in mind when you believe, feel, and do things for reasons. Since internalist views deny that your reason for ϕ-ing could be such things, these views are unacceptable. We cannot think of your reasons for ϕ-ing as consisting of states of mind or the contents of such states and we cannot think of your reasons for

[17] In Littlejohn (2012), I offer further arguments against statist and internalist approaches to reasons of all sorts and try to address all the main arguments for these approaches in the literature.

ϕ-ing as consisting of facts about your own mind. Thus, while states of mind and mental events have some sort of rational role to play, they play a role in *providing* reasons, a role they play without *being* reasons. My proposal is that only *knowledge* provides reasons in the sense that matters here: it's only when you know *p* that you could ϕ where your reason for ϕ-ing could be that *p* where you don't have to first change your mind about whether *p*. If this is right, knowledge plays a distinctive role in our story about how we're guided by reasons. If my opponents are right, something else can play this role.

I want to begin by highlighting three constraints that something has to meet if it's going to figure in an account of possession. The first constraint has to do with *ability*. Consider Nozick's (1981) experience machine. Agnes undergoes a series of experiences that dispose her to form false beliefs about her surroundings. It seems to her that she and everyone she cares about are flourishing. In the standard telling, her beliefs are all mistaken. This isn't essential to the story. Agnes can be cut off from reality even if some of her beliefs happen to be true.[18] Let's suppose that it seems to her that her brother has just crossed the stage at graduation and a smile stretches across Agnes' face because she believes he just graduated.[19] What the lab technicians don't realize is that *precisely* as Agnes undergoes this experience her brother crosses the stage and accepts his diploma. While she believes correctly that her brother is graduating and is happy because she believes this, her reason for being happy isn't that her brother is graduating. She cannot be rationally guided by such a fact, not when she's cut off from reality.

If *p* is your reason for ϕ-ing, you have to have the ability to be guided by the fact that *p* and that requires a non-accidental connection to it, one that's missing from the Gettiered version of Nozick's experience machine. This is the *ability problem*, the problem of stating a suitable account of what would eliminate the accidental

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[18] An anonymous referee reminded me that there will be messy details having to do with the contents of her thoughts. We can control for some of this if we focus on the beliefs she forms soon after the switch.

[19] In the bad case, she can ϕ because she believes *p* without ϕ-ing for the reason that *p*. In the bad case, the fact that her brother just received his diploma is *not* her reason for smiling or cheering. In the bad case, there's nothing that could be Agnes' reason for being so happy but there are reasons why she's happy. In the good case, her reason for being happy might well be that her brother just received his diploma. If so, that's a reason why she's smiling and a reason why she's happy. In this case it's also true that she's smiling and she's happy because she believes her brother just graduated. There's no competition in describing the good case between the fact about the situation and the fact about her mental life. For further discussion of these kinds of points, see Alvarez (2010) and Littlejohn (2012). Some critics think that it's a weakness of this view that we can't say what it is in the bad case that was Agnes' reason was for being happy. It's not a weakness; it's a strength. Some critics try to identify that reason but then say obviously false things about what it is (e.g., a falsehood or a state of mind). Other critics criticize my proposal but (wisely) don't try their hand at specifying what this reason is.

connection between belief and fact so that if you ϕ in the belief that *p*, your reason for ϕ-ing could be that *p*.[20]

The second constraint has to do with *rational authority*. Other things equal, acquiring evidence is supposed to improve your epistemic position. When you have it, you're supposed to have the authority to treat the relevant reason as a reason in your deliberation. If your true belief isn't rationally held, it wouldn't be proper to include *p* in your reasoning. Thus, whatever condition or conditions we take to be sufficient for possession, we have to think of these condition or conditions as sufficient for underwriting an undefeated entitlement or warrant to treat *p* as a reason.

The third constraint has to do with the generality of reasons and the role of conceptual capacities in coming to possess them. Davidson's argument tells us that reasons stand in logical relations, relations that only facts or propositions can stand in. The facts that we're primarily interested in are those that make perceptually based predicative judgments true. Such judgments are true only if some particular, a, belongs to some category (i.e., the Fs) by being an F. To grasp such reasons, we have to grasp the fact that some particular case belongs to a range of possible cases:

> A concept, as I will speak, is always of (being) such-and-such. As such it has a certain sort of generality … It may be, necessarily, of just one thing. There may even be one thing it is necessarily of. Still, there is a sort of generality it has. Suppose a concept were of being Frege. To fit that concept one could stop nowhere short of being him. But suppose (if you can) Frege had taken to wearing a beret, or had devoted his life to sailing. He would have been different than he was. Still, he would have fit that concept … There being at least one such range of cases is one thing one might mean by generality. It is what I will mean here by the generality of the conceptual. The key feature of the conceptual, on its present understanding, is that for anything conceptual there is a specific form of generality intrinsic to it. There is then a range which is the range of cases, or circumstances, which would be ones of something instancing that generality (Travis 2013: 125).

To grasp such things requires the use of conceptual capacities, capacities to grasp that a particular belongs to a range of cases. If something doesn't involve the actualization of any such capacities, it doesn't relate us to the general and if something doesn't involve the requisite sort of generality it cannot be the sort of thing that could be true or false. Since reasons are truths, truths involve this sort of generality, and getting a grip of such generalities requires the use of conceptual capacities, the account of possession has to implicate these conceptual capacities.

Proponents of the knowledge-first approach can tick all the boxes. If knowledge *is* the ability to be guided by reasons that consist of facts, the ability problem doesn't

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[20] While Hyman (1999), Littlejohn (2012), McDowell (1998), Mantel (2013), and Unger (1975) have a non-accidental connection requirement in their accounts of possession, not everyone agrees that this is a genuine desiderata. See Hofman (2014) for discussion.

arise for E=K.[21] Even if we reject this identification, knowledge involves a non-accidental connection to truth. The ability problem arises most sharply in those cases where the connection between belief and truth is accidental. As for the authority problem, it seems that this problem doesn't arise for E=K because anything known is justifiably believed. To justifiably believe something, you must have sufficient epistemic authority to include *p* in some of your reasoning or deliberation. Finally, it's clear that propositional knowledge involves the exercise of the relevant conceptual capacities.

If knowledge is unique in meeting these three constraints, it is distinctive in just the way I claim. Its being distinctive in meeting these three constraints means that there's nothing apart from knowledge that involves the exercise of the conceptual capacities that must be activated for you to be rationally guided by the fact that a is F where you have both the ability and the authority to treat the fact that a is F as a reason for ϕ-ing. Not everyone thinks that knowledge is unique in this way, for it's now widely believed that perception can meet these constraints, too. If perception can tick all three boxes, it could provide reasons that could be the rational basis for your non-inferential perceptual beliefs. It could do the work I've claimed can only be done by knowledge. For it to do this work, however, it would have to tick all the boxes. In what follows, I'll argue that it cannot.

3.1 Reasons-First and the Reconciliatory View of Perception

In §3.1-3.3 I'll argue against a conjunction of these claims:

> **Perceptual Sufficiency:** Perceptual relations alone between you and your surroundings can put you in the position to believe things for reasons that consist of facts.
>
> **Perceptual Dependence:** Perceptual knowledge is possible only when the subject's perceptual beliefs are held for reasons where these reasons are independently possessed because the subject bears the right perceptual relations to her surroundings.

My argument starts from the assumption that perception is fundamentally a relation between a perceiver and things in her surroundings that perception brings into view.[22]

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[21] For defense of this approach, see Hyman (1999). An anonymous referee asked whether this conflicts with the view, defended by Williamson (2000), that knowledge is a state of mind. I think this is an interesting issue and I have to confess that I don't have any settled view on these matters. It doesn't conflict with the idea that knowledge is mental, but it does seem to conflict with the idea that knowledge is a state. (It also seems to conflict with the idea that knowledge is an achievement, a claim that I'm quite happy to reject.) Hacker (2013) argues that knowledge is not a state even though it is signified by a stative verb, and I find his arguments to be rather persuasive.

[22] If this claim is correct, perception of things in our surroundings is explanatorily prior to the other features our experiences might have (e.g., their phenomenal character or their representational content). I cannot hope to give a defense of the idea that perception is fundamentally a relation between the perceiver and her surroundings. For defenses of the idea, see Brewer (2011), Logue (this volume), Martin (2009), and Travis (2011, 2013). Ginsborg (2011), Logue (2014), McDowell (2009), and Schellenberg

If this relationalist picture of perception is correct, we should reject the conjunction of Perceptual Sufficiency and Dependence.

As the case for the relationalist view has been made elsewhere, I'll assume that it's correct and assume that the proponents of reasons-first epistemology will take this view on board. An important question is whether we can reconcile this approach to perception with the claim that perceptual experience has a representational content by virtue of involving the subject's conceptual capacities. According to *reconciliatory views* experience can be both relational and representational:

> Perception makes knowledge about things available by placing them in view for us. But it is precisely by virtue of having content as they do that perceptual experiences puts us in such relations to things (McDowell 2013: 144).

To start my case against the use of reconciliatory views by proponents of the reasons-first approach, consider the first reconciliatory view:

> **The First Reconciliatory View:** When we have perceptual knowledge that a is F, it is the result of seeing that a is F. By seeing that a is F, we'll either have the fact that a is F or the fact that we see that a is F as part of our evidence.[23] Seeing that a is F is understood as standing in the right visual relation to things in your surroundings and the fact that a is F is understood as the object of visual awareness. Having such facts as reasons requires an appropriate exercise of conceptual capacities (e.g., seeing that a is F requires exercising the conceptual capacities involved in characterizing something as an F), but seeing that a is F is nevertheless a relational affair.[24]

This view would appear to be the view that McDowell (1998) defends, a view he recently described as follows:

(2014) all defend reconciliatory views that are supposed to reconcile representational and relational views of perception.

[23] According to McDowell (2006), a subject's reason for believing *p* is never *p*, so he thought that a subject's reason for believing *p* would be that she saw that *p*. Pritchard (2012) defends a similar view. Hopp (2012) and Schroeder (2011, forthcoming) hold that *p* can be a subject's reason for believing *p*. I think McDowell is right that your reason for believing *p* could never be *p*, but nothing turns on this issue here.

[24] McDowell once defended this sort of view, but he's since modified his position. (See his (2009). A referee asked what sorts of views should count as relational. Views of the kind defended by Burge would *not* count as relational because the experience we have when we see is *not* a relation to things in our surroundings, but a representational state that is about things in our surroundings. Someone might think, as Burge does, that the experience you have when you see something in your surroundings is *not* a perception, but the proponents of the view I have in mind would reject this. The experience you have when you perceive something *is* the perception, but you could have a very similar experience if you did not perceive things but were merely hallucinating. I'd expect the proponents of the first reconciliatory view to be disjunctivists. For Burge's thoughts on disjunctivism, see his (2005). For Travis' thoughts on those thoughts, see Travis (2013: 259-313).

> Suppose I have a bird in plain view, and that puts me in a position to know non-inferentially that it is a cardinal. It is not that I infer that what I see is a cardinal from the way it looks ... I can immediately recognize cardinals if the viewing conditions are good enough ... Since my experience puts me in a position to know non-inferentially that what I see is a cardinal, its content would have to include a proposition in which the concept of a cardinal figures: perhaps one expressible ... by saying "That's a cardinal" (2009: 259).

Initially, it will help to focus on this view because it is a version of the reasons-first view that has these two features:

> **Visualism:** Facts about possessed reasons for visual beliefs supervene upon facts about a subject's visual contact with her surroundings.
>
> **Content Constraint:** If S knows visually that a is F, S's visual experience has the representational content that a is F.

Visualism is a crucial assumption in McDowell's epistemological argument for his disjunctivist conception of experience according to which your experience can be a matter of some fact, such as the fact that a is F, being made manifest. Such a fact is made visually manifest iff the subject sees that a is F. This fact being made visually manifest is, in turn, supposed to put you in a position to be rationally guided by it (i.e., to be in a position to believe things for the reason that a is F or for the reason that you see that a is F).[25] If Visualism is false, it's possible for two subjects to stand in the very same perceptual relations to their environments and yet possess different reasons for their perceptual beliefs. The difference in reasons wouldn't be traced to a difference in what they saw or what their experiences were like, so it would be beyond their ken. The subject that had reasons inaccessible to the second subject would thus enjoy an epistemic benefit because of something beyond her ken. For McDowell, this isn't allowed. Since nothing can confer any sort of epistemic benefit upon you unless it's within your ken, there must be some difference in the subjects' experiences that corresponds to the difference in the reasons they possess. This is just what Visualism says.

The Content Constraint captures the idea that there's a match between the content of perceptual beliefs that constitute knowledge and the content of the perceptual experiences that provide the reasons that put us in a position to know the things we know in forming such beliefs. McDowell acknowledges that the Content Constraint could be true only if the conceptual capacities exercised in believing that a is F are active in the experience you have when you see that a is F. As the passage above makes clear, the content of an experience, which is due to the exercise of conceptual capacities, helps determine what's presented to us in experience. He would reject the idea that these capacities operate on that which is made present in experience anyway independently from the exercise of these conceptual capacities.

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[25] See McDowell (1998).

Mere sensibility, he'd say, doesn't bring things into view, but only does so in concert with the operation of the understanding.[26]

One way to put pressure on the first reconciliatory view is to think about environmental luck cases. In these cases a subject lucks into a true belief by correctly predicating a property to some object she sees even though she easily could have mistakenly predicated this property to a ringer and thereby ended up with a false belief. In a suitably good case, it seems that we can know by looking that something is a barn, say, which gives us (1):

1. In the good case, it's possible to have perceptual knowledge expressed by, 'This structure is a barn'.
2. The subject has this perceptual knowledge only because the experience has the same content as this belief and because this experience justifies beliefs with this content [(1), Visualism and the Content Constraint].
3. In a correlative bad environmental luck case, a subject could stand in the same visual relations to her environment that our first subject stands in with respect to hers but the belief she expresses by saying, 'This structure is a barn' wouldn't constitute knowledge.
4. This subject would have the very same reasons for her perceptual beliefs and an experience that would justify the belief expressed by, 'This structure is a barn' and would believe for the very same reason as the subject in the good case [(3) and Visualism].
5. The subject in the bad case would thus know that the structure is a barn [(4) and the assumption that if you believe something for the reason that *p*, you can ϕ for the reason that *p* if you ϕ in the belief that *p*].

This is an inconsistent set of claims, so something has to give.

Someone could block the reasoning that generates the inconsistency at the outset by denying (1).[27] If we do this and leave the background restrictions in place,

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[26] For McDowell, the understanding is operative when our conceptual capacities are operative. In his view, conscious experience is the joint product of sensibility and the operation of understanding, so things are only brought into view for us by having been brought under concepts. (We can work with a very liberal conception of concepts here so that placing something into a category is sufficient for bringing something under a concept.)

[27] An anonymous referee notes (rightly) that we can block this reasoning by denying that sameness of reasons implies sameness of knowledge. Indeed it does. Elsewhere (2012: 133-44), I've addressed McDowell's (1998) arguments for the claim that sameness of reasons implies sameness of knowledge. My aim here is slightly different, which is to argue that experience cannot shoulder the epistemic burden that certain epistemologists require of it. Contrary to what McDowell (1998), Pritchard (2012), and Turri (forthcoming) suggest, when we perceive things and experience places things in

we'll end up having to say that perceptual knowledge is limited to knowledge of how things seem to us. Any perceptible feature of a thing can appear to be different than it is. In light of this, it seems we should be able to generate fake barn style cases for a wide range of properties (e.g., a person's identity, a person's mood, the colors of surfaces, the kind of thing a thing is, etc.). If the possibility of such cases is sufficient to establish that the scope of non-inferential knowledge is so limited that it couldn't include properties like *being a barn*, it would be difficult to defend the view that our non-inferential knowledge includes knowledge of some other properties of external things (e.g., their colors or shapes). We should be able to tell by looking what color a thing is if we're in ideal conditions, so (1) should stay.

It looks like (5) follows from (4). Suppose you believed that you were out of gin for the reason that one of your guests just poured the remaining gin into the shaker. If this is your reason for believing this, this could be your reason for being disappointed and your reason for reaching for the vodka. It couldn't be your reason for feeling this or doing that unless you knew that one of your guests just poured the remaining gin into the shaker. You can only believe something for the reason that *p* if you're able to believe, do, and feel further things for that reason. Thus, if responding in these further ways requires knowledge of *p*, your belief in *p* would have to constitute knowledge.

McDowell suggests, in keeping with his view, that a subject in an environmental luck case neither sees that the structure is a barn nor knows that it's a barn. Since he wants to use the visual relations the subject bears to her environment to determine what she's in a position to know, it looks like he'll have to abandon Visualism, the Content Constraint, or (3). Unfortunately, it seems that (3) is rather plausible, particularly if you think, as he does, that his view vindicates the intuitions that relationalists appeal to in motivating their view, such as the intuition that, "perception places our surroundings in view" (2008: 14). The presence or absence of unseen fakes should have no bearing whatever upon whether vision places your surroundings in view for you.[28]

Some writers have tried to turn this objection on its head, arguing that the kind of perceptual relations we stand in when we're in the environmental luck cases are actually good enough for something epistemically good. Turri (forthcoming) suggests that the relations provide knowledge. Hughes (2014) thinks that it puts us in a position to believe things for the reasons that are the facts we see even if we don't know them to obtain:

> In Fake Barns, the fact that there is a barn is (along with various facts about Henry) one of the causes of Henry's belief that there is a barn. It figures in a causal explanation of why Henry believes what he does (Hughes 2014: 459).[29]

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view, it does *not* thereby provide reasons that guarantee that we'll be in a position to know.

[28] An anonymous referee observed that this was not as obvious to her/him than it seems to be to me. See below for the reasons that support this claim.

[29] I used to think he was right, but I now think that it's not for reasons discussed in Littlejohn (2014). Like Carter (2013) and Jarvis (2013), I'm skeptical of the idea that the environmental luck cases are cases in which the correctness of your predication is attributable to the exercise of your abilities.

If I understand the thought here, the idea is that the target fact (i.e., that the building is a barn) explains the belief that there's a barn on the hillside in just the same way it would if there weren't any fakes present. We'd agree that a subject's reason for doing things could be that the structure is a barn if the subject is in the good case, so we have to admit that it's the subject's reason in the bad.

The guiding idea seems to be that perceptual contact with the subject of predication and veridical experience is sufficient for putting the subject in a position to do things for the reason that's the target fact because the same explanatory relations holds between that fact and your attitudes in the environmental luck case as hold in the correlative good case in which the fakes are removed. I think this is a mistake. While the causal relations between the barn and its properties might be the same in the good case and bad, it doesn't follow that the facts about the barn play the same explanatory role in the two cases.

Some cases should make this clear:

> **Lucky Penny:** Jill has a lucky penny. She hasn't seen other pennies before. Her brother stole her lucky penny and took it with him to school. He dropped it. Someone picked it up but later dropped it. It worked its way across the city. A week later Jill was on a school trip when she looked down and saw a penny that happened to be her lucky penny. "It's my lucky penny!" she said.[30]
>
> **White Diamond:** Agnes had a bucket of fake diamonds marked 'diamonds' that she left in her flat to attract the attention of any jewel thieves that might break in. Each stone in the bucket looked like a real diamond. What she didn't realize is that one of the hundreds of stones in the bucket was indeed a real diamond. That stone happened to be sitting on top. A thief knocked the bucket over clumsily, saw the stones spilled across the floor, saw that the bucket was labeled diamonds, and grabbed the first stone that she could believing it to be a diamond. She left the others because she thought that she heard someone coming. She happened to grab the only diamond in the flat and believes that she has a diamond.

These are similar to environmental luck cases insofar they involve veridical experience and simple seeing with nothing that interferes 'in between' the subject and the fact. These cases strike me as being clear non-knowledge cases and it's clear, I think that the facts they believe to hold cannot rationally guide them or be their reasons for believing, feeling, or doing things. If the combination of simple seeing and veridical experience bringing about a true belief were sufficient for the target facts to be the causal explanation of the belief, we'd have to say that the fact that Agnes took a

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[30] An anonymous referee noted that it might be irrational for the subject to judge that this is her lucky penny and that this accounts for why she couldn't know. Perhaps, but part of the issue is whether she can see that it is her lucky penny. I think she cannot. If propositional seeing is a purely visual matter (something that this same anonymous referee is rightly skeptical of), it's hard to see how the rationality of belief could bear on what's seen.

diamond explains why she believes she has a diamond and the fact that the penny Jill sees is her lucky penny explains why she believes what she does. I don't think their beliefs are explained by these facts, for while they see the relevant objects and have veridical experiences, the features of the things that they see don't enable them to recognize, say, that the rock is a diamond or that the penny is the lucky penny. That's because recognizing the penny as the lucky penny or the diamond as a diamond is possible only if these things have a distinctive look that would trigger a disposition to classify these things in the relevant ways. Since they don't have this look, the correctness of the classification cannot be attributable to the subject's sensitivity to the features of the objects that would show that the relevant facts obtained (i.e., that the stone is a diamond and that the penny is the particular penny). Once we see that, we see that the subject's beliefs *aren't* explained by the target facts, in which case the case against (3) fails.

3.2 The Second Reconciliatory View

It might seem that the problems that have to do with environmental luck call only for a minor modification of the first reconciliatory view. Couldn't we just add some further condition or conditions (e.g., safety?) to rule out environmental luck?

> **The Second Reconciliatory View:** When we have perceptual knowledge that a is F, it's the result of seeing that a is F. By seeing that a is F, we'll either have the fact that a is F or the fact that we see that a is F as part of our evidence. Seeing that a is F is understood as standing in the right visual relation to things in your surroundings when further conditions are met (i.e., conditions that don't supervene upon the visual relations between the perceiver and her environment). Having such facts as reasons requires an appropriate exercise of conceptual capacities (e.g., seeing that a is F requires exercising the conceptual capacities involved in characterizing something as an F), but seeing that a is F is nevertheless a relational affair.[31]

I don't think minor modifications will work. For a starter, it's hard to see that there's anything left of the idea that a fact is an object of visual awareness once it's conceded that visual relations to a subject's surroundings alone don't determine whether the subject sees that a is F. If seeing that a is F *is* a visual relation, whether you see that a is F has to supervene upon purely visual relations between a perceiver and her environment because everything supervenes upon itself.[32]

If seeing that a is F depends upon further modal conditions (e.g., what would be brought into view in nearby cases), conditions that don't supervene upon visual relations between a perceiver and her environment, it's just not clear what the reconciliatory view's positive proposal is. It's clear what the proposal cannot be. It's

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[31] This seems to be the sort of view that Pritchard (2012) defends.

[32] McGinn (1999) seems to have thought that seeing that a is F is a matter of being visually aware of a fact, but I find French (2012) and Ranalli's (2014) arguments to the contrary to be persuasive. For further arguments that we don't see facts, see Moltmann (2013).

clear that the proposal cannot be one according to which a perceiver stands in the relation of visual awareness to something that's her reason and thereby is able to believe things for reasons that she's visually aware of. Holding relations of visual awareness fixed we can modify the further conditions and thereby determine whether the subject sees that a is F and whether the subject can believe things for either the reason that a is F or the reason that she sees that a is F.

To put to rest the idea that it's visual awareness that puts us in a position to believe things for reasons, consider an argument distilled from Travis' work:

The Generality Argument

1. Everything we perceive is particular.
2. The facts that we know perceptually aren't particular, but general, as they are facts that have to do with the categories that the particulars we see belong to.
3. Thus, the objects of perceptual awareness are *not* the objects of perceptual knowledge.

What we see when we see some particular in our surroundings *isn't* that the particular fits into a class of similar things:

> But don't we see that the sun has risen? And don't we thus also see that this is true? That the sun has risen is no object which sends out rays that reach my eyes, no visible thing as the sun itself is (Frege quoted in Travis 2013: 123).

What we see in our surroundings and what we know about these things belong on different sides of Frege's line. On the left are the particulars that instance generalities and on the right we find the conceptual, the representational, and the general (Travis 2013: 126). The stuff on the right represents the stuff on the left as belonging to categories or kinds.

Once we appreciate this point, we cannot say that perception takes in some fact or something that involves the generality that facts have and thereby places a reason before us that we might use to come to know how things are. All that perception can do is place particulars in view. At this stage, people often say that they appreciate the force of this point but see no need to abandon the reconciliatory view. Even if the fundamental relation is between a perceiver and the particulars she sees, mightn't she also have an experience while she sees the things she does where this experience has a representational content that enables her to believe things for reasons connected to this content? Provided that we don't claim to perceive the content, isn't such a view perfectly compatible with Travis' Fregean insight?

Ultimately, I think not, but the argument of this paper doesn't require any sort of demonstration of the incompatibility of relationalist with representationalist approaches to perceptual experience. My aim is simply to show that there's no good reason to think that perception's power to provide knowledge doesn't derive from its power to provide reasons.

3.3 A Third Reconciliatory View?

McDowell has backed off the idea that when we see that a is F, this is a matter of being made visually aware of the fact that a is F. Facts, he now concedes, aren't things that we see or perceive.[33] He was moved to abandon this view by Travis' observation that

[33] See McDowell (2009, Chp. 14).

everything we perceive in our surroundings is particular. Nevertheless, he wants to retain the idea that our conceptual capacities are active in experience. Whereas the relationalist wants to say that conceptual capacities play no role in bringing the particulars we see into view and only are active when it comes to judging that something brought into view is an instance of some kind, the reconciliatory view says that such conceptual capacities must be active for perception to bring into view what it brings into view. The actualization of such capacities is essential to experience and doesn't merely operate on the particulars that are present in experience anyway.

Let's consider a third reconciliatory view, one that seems to avoid the difficulties above by jettisoning the idea that the perceptual relation has facts as one of its relata:

> **The Third Reconciliatory View:** What we see isn't ever a fact or something that's true. Nevertheless, conceptual capacities are active in experience and the things we see are presented as being instances of kinds or as having properties. The conceptual capacities do not operate on things that are present in experience anyway; rather, they are active in bringing particulars into experience and so into view. It is because these things are brought into view, in part, because of the operation of these conceptual capacities, our predicative judgments are based on reasons.[34]

Against this proposal, I shall argue that it's a mistake to think of the representational character of experience as essential to perceptual knowledge. Representation is essential to the account of perceptual knowledge that says that such knowledge arises because our perceptual judgments are based on reasons, but this shows that it's not essential to our understanding of perceptual knowledge that it's constituted by beliefs based on reasons.

The Problem of Transduction

1. If we're not visually aware of facts, either experience has no propositional content or there's a transductive process that takes non-propositional input (e.g., an object seen) and yields a propositional content for visual experience.[35]

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[34] This seems to be closer to Ginsborg (2011) and McDowell (2009).

[35] An anonymous referee asks why there would have to be a transductive process? Why, she/he asks, couldn't we say that having a visual experience is simply entailed by seeing an object? I think that having an experience *is* entailed by having an experience, but the tricky issue is whether having an experience with representational content could simply be so entailed. I'd think that we'd need a transductive process to understand how perceptual knowledge is possible because without it, it would be impossible to understand how an experience with the content that it had could be properly grounded in the way that the perceived objects are. Without this grounding, the representation could not reliably provide accurate representations true of the things we see. (Remember that all sides have agreed that the things we are related to in perception is not itself a representation, but a thing that can be represented more or less accurately.)

2. If the former, the propositional content of experience isn't epistemically essential in the sense that it's required for knowledge because we have perceptual knowledge.
3. If the latter, the propositional content of experience isn't epistemically essential because there's a possible creature with our perceptual knowledge that acquires this knowledge without this intervening process yielding a propositional content of experience. Instead, there's a transductive process that takes non-propositional input and yields content for visual belief.
4. If we're not visually aware of facts, the propositional content of experience isn't epistemically essential.
5. We're not visually aware of facts.
6. The propositional content of experience isn't epistemically essential.

The guiding thought is that if we think of perception as fundamentally being a relation between the perceiver and the particulars she sees, her experience will only have representational content the accuracy of which turns on how things are with this perceived particular if there's some process that yields a content by taking in the particulars we see and generating some sort of content from that. At the ground level, what's taken in would have to be something we see if indeed the perception grounds the representational character of the experience.[36] Once we see this, it's hard to see what reason there could be for thinking that this transductive process that takes a non-propositional input and yields something that's the kind of content that can bear logical relations to belief couldn't simply yield a *belief's* content as opposed to an *experience's* content. If the aim is to acquire knowledge, I see no advantage for wiring things up one way rather than another.

On the pure relationalist view that I'd favor, what's present *in* experience is always particular and so a's belonging to the range of cases that makes for an F's being present cannot be present to the perceiver through her conscious experience of a. What *is* present is something of a's that merits the classification of a as being an F.[37]

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[36] An anonymous referee suggested that even if relational perception is more fundamental than representational experience, it could be that nothing further has to happen for perception to give rise to representational content. I don't think it could be that easy. The perceptual relations that we bear to the things we see couldn't select some unique way of representing them. If they did, representationalists would have to deny the possibility of two perceivers perceiving the same thing where only one perceived it accurately. They would also have to say that any two perceivers that perceived the same things would have experiences that visually represented the objects as having the very same properties. I don't think that many representationalists would want to say that the possibility of my dog and I seeing a squirrel turns on our having pairs of experiences that attribute all and only the same properties to the squirrel.

[37] The range of possible particulars that could play this role is extensive. This could be a's parts, a's condition, or tropes.

The perceiver's knowledge that a is F depends upon whether she has the ability to classify things as F when aware of the features of a that merit this classification. It doesn't require some representation of a as being F that's prior to belief or judgment.

By contrast, the proponents of the third reconciliatory view insist that the understanding and the conceptual capacities do not operate upon some particulars that sensibility anyway brings into view without the operation of these conceptual capacities. They think these particulars are only brought into view by an exercise of these capacities in concert with the operation of sensibility. Since they think that the experience and its representational character is grounded in how things are with the particulars brought into view, they must think that the understanding and our conceptual capacities operate on something particular in generating an experience with that content and an experience the accuracy of which turns on how things are with the particulars we ultimately see. What's most unclear is what advantage there is in saying that the conceptual capacities operate on particulars in generating the experience and its representational character as opposed to saying that conceptual capacities operate on the particulars present in experience through the operation of sensibility alone.

So far, the problem is merely a challenge. The challenge can be met if someone can produce an argument that shows that there must be some sort of suitable representational content in place that would then play a role in explaining why the subject believes what she does. It's hard to imagine how this challenge might be met, but let's push this worry a bit further. One way to get representation into the picture if you're skeptical of the idea that experience is itself representational is to introduce recognitional abilities into the picture as something that operates upstream from the experience on the things that experience puts us in touch with anyway, quite independently from the exercise of any conceptual capacities.[38] On this model, a subject sees an object, a, and the perceptual experience the subject has of a just *is* the subject seeing a. There are recognitional capacities upstream from belief that account for the subject's disposition to judge that a is an F. The alternative model that the proponents of reasons-first defend is this. The subject sees an object, a, and has a perceptual experience as of a's being F. The experience has a representational character determined, in part, by a and, in part, by the subject's discriminatory and recognitional capacities. These capacities account for the subject's disposition to judge that a is an F.

The main differences between these accounts are these. The first view doesn't see experience as having a representational character shaped by the exercise of conceptual or recognitional capacities, but the second one does and sees the operation of these capacities as playing an epistemic role by fixing the content of that experience. I think that this second view is the sort of thing that Ginsborg has in mind when she offers this example:

> [I]magine two people who have different discriminative capacities with respect to the experience of music. One

[38] For a discussion of the role that recognitional abilities play in the acquisition of perceptual knowledge, see Millar (2011). One of the aims of this paper is to show that his approach to perceptual knowledge gives us the resources to overcome some of the problems that arise for epistemological disjunctivists like McDowell (1998) and Pritchard (2012).

> can discriminate among chords of different qualities (for example, major, minor, and diminished triads), the other among the timbres of different but related instruments (cornet, trumpet, saxophone). It is natural to think that each of them, listening to the same major chord played by a saxophone trio, will hear it differently. Because the first is, as we might put it, sensitive to the harmonic qualities of what she is hearing but not to the timbre, her experience will register its character of being a major triad. The experience of the second, conversely, will register the characteristic saxophone sound of the chord, but not its harmonic quality (2011: 151).

If her proposal is correct, a certain feature of the sound is present in the experience because of the operation of a discriminatory capacity (which may or may not be a recognitional capacity), but the third reconciliatory view says that what's present in the experience will be the particular sounds the subjects hear. In contrast, any difference between the two subjects' experiences, the relational view says, will be upstream from experience and will not have any bearing on the representational content of the experience.

The proponents of this third reconciliatory view face a trilemma. What is the basis of the relevant predication when the subject makes a perceptual judgment? If the subject judges, say, that some sphere is red, some chord is a minor chord, some wine is acidic, etc., should we say that the basis of the predication is (a) something particular that's present in experience, (b) something representational, or (c) something present in experience that's representational?[39]

It looks like we can strike (c) from the list. It was agreed upon by all sides that the way for defenders of the reconciliatory view to reconcile the representational character of experience with relationalism is to acknowledge that what we see is not general. What (c), says, is that the basis for the predicative judgment is both seen and representational. This is a mythical beast, one that would have to straddle Frege's line.

What about (a)? The trouble with this is that if we say that the basis for the predication you make when you judge that, say, this sphere is red, this chord is a minor chord, or this wine is acidic, we're saying that the basis for the predication is something particular, something that cannot stand in the kinds of logical relations that reasons do. If the basis is the particular, there couldn't be something that is your reason for predicating this property of this particular. This is fatal to the representationalist view, but it's a view that I have a soft spot for as I prefer the first view to the second.

What about (b)? If we opt for (b), can't we save the reasons-first view by putting representation back into the picture? Putting representation back into the picture comes at a cost. You cannot have predication done for a reason unless there's something general that's a suitable representation that guides the predication, but if the basis for the predication *is* something suitably general and representational, notice that this implies that the basis for the predication is *not* present in perceptual consciousness.

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[39] An anonymous referee suggests that these options needn't exclude each other, and I think that that's right. The argument is supposed to show that these options won't do the work alone or in combination.

Imagine staring at a red sphere in your hand. You have a choice. You can think of what's present to consciousness as the basis for judging that this is red, in which case, the predication of redness isn't something done for a reason. You can think of the predication as done for a reason, but the reason for which you'd predicate redness of the ball isn't something visible and it isn't part of something visible. Of the two approaches, the first strikes me as being more plausible. At some point between you and the ball, representation comes into the picture, but the part of the representation that has to do with predication isn't itself ever made visible. Thus, it is hard to see how something representational is your basis (even in part) for predicating anything of anything.

If the third reconciliatory view cannot deliver the goods for the proponents of reasons-first epistemology, none can. There cannot be a fourth view that does what the previous views cannot for any modification to the views considered thus far will either take the objects of visual awareness to be facts or particulars and we've seen that none of these views can help the proponents of the reasons-first view make sense of the idea that our perceptual beliefs are based on reasons. There is nothing provided by perception *alone* that could be your reason for believing things, doing things, or feeling things, so knowledge is epistemically distinctive. Of course, perception helps us acquire knowledge, but it doesn't do so by providing us reasons that could be in our possession prior to or independent from the possession of perceptual knowledge.

4. Evidence and Justification

I've focused thus far on the relationship between knowledge and the possession of evidence or reasons, but haven't said much about the relationship between knowledge and the attainment of an epistemic status like justification. I'll conclude with a brief discussion of the relationship between reasons and resultant epistemic status.

On the traditional view of things, justified beliefs are beliefs based on good reasons. This view requires that there's a way of having or possessing reasons that doesn't involve the target belief, the belief whose justificatory standing is supposed to be explained in terms of the rational support of the relevant reasons. So much for that view! In the non-inferential case, your belief that *p* cannot be justified *by* being based on some reasons that you'd possess independently from having formed the belief that *p*. In the non-inferential case, there's nothing that could be your reason for believing *p*.[40]

Let's consider a different approach to the relationship between reasons and epistemic status. Instead of seeing status as turning on what reasons support a belief, we can see status as turning on whether beliefs bring reasons to us that could then support further things (e.g., doxastic, affective, and practical responses).

Consider a simple closure principle for justification:

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[40] In saying that there's nothing that's your reason for believing, say, Agnes is on the sofa if this belief is non-inferential, I'm not saying that there's no reason why you believe this. There is. You see her and you recognize her. Such things can explain why you believe *and* explain how you know without being your reasons for believing anything at all. You needn't have any attitude whatever to such things for them to explain why you believe or how you know, but they couldn't be your reason for anything if you didn't have any attitude toward them.

> J-Closure: If you justifiably believe *X* and know that *Y* is a logical consequence of *X*, you can justifiably infer *Y* if your come to believe *Y* by means of competent deduction.

A natural explanation of J-Closure is one that appeals to this connection between the justificatory status of a belief and reasons:

> J-Reasons: If you justifiably believe *X* and can justifiably infer *X*'s known consequences, you'd be able to ϕ for the reason that *X*.

To get a feel for J-Reasons, suppose you justifiably believe that Agnes was the one who finished off the gin. This belief might be inferential or non-inferential. If it's inferential, it might be based on deductive reasoning or some sort of non-deductive reasoning. All we know about this belief is that it's justifiably held. It could, presumably, be justifiably held even if you have lost the original grounds for forming it. Suppose you deduce that Agnes once drank gin. What J-Reasons says, in effect, is that if this is something that you can justifiably believe, in part, because you justifiably believe that Agnes was the one who finished off the gin and because you can justifiably believe all manner of known consequences of the first belief, you're able to believe, feel, or do something for the reason that Agnes was the one who finished off the gin.

If J-Reasons is part of the best explanation of J-Closure, perhaps we should accept it. The idea would be that competent deduction transmits a status (i.e., justification) because beliefs that attain that status enable you to believe further things for reasons. If this idea is correct, it has a rather surprising consequence. If this idea is correct, the distinction between justification and knowledge breaks down.

J-Reasons implies this surprising thesis:

> J-K: If you justifiably believe *X*, you know *X*.

This is because of this link between ability and knowledge:

> A-K: You cannot ϕ for the reason that *X* unless you know *X*.

Once we see that you cannot ϕ for the reason that *X* unless you know *X,* we can see that you cannot justifiably believe what you don't know.[41] Justified beliefs are beliefs that provide you with reasons that can be your reasons for believing things, feeling things, doing things. If you believe, feel, or do things for reasons, these reasons must be known. Thus, the original belief must itself constitute knowledge.

Why is this? Why must beliefs constitute knowledge to be justifiably held? The obvious answer is that the justificatory status of a belief depends upon whether *it* can provide rational support by providing us with reasons. It seems that a plausible candidate for the fundamental norm of belief is one that tells us that beliefs are supposed to provide us with reasons:

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[41] This view has been defended by McDowell (1998), Steglich-Petersen (2013), Sutton (2007), Unger (1975), and Williamson (forthcoming) although the arguments that these authors offer differ from the one offered here. I believe that this is the first attempt to derive a standard of justification like KN from claims about the connection between knowledge and ability.

RN: You shouldn't believe *p* unless your belief that *p* is true can provide you with reasons that can be your reasons for ϕ-ing.[42]

It turns out that only knowledge can play this role in providing reasons. Since only knowledgeable beliefs do that, we now know why belief is governed by this norm:

KN: You shouldn't believe *p* unless you know *p*.

Since these norms determine what's justified, right, permitted, appropriate, etc., the best you can hope for if you believe what you don't know is an excuse.

We now have the beginning of an argument for the claim that knowledge is the fundamental norm of belief, one that explains why we should think of the aim of belief as knowledge, not merely truth.[43] Once we see that knowledge, not perception, is what provides us with reasons, we can see that possessing evidence requires a commitment to truth that's not present in perceptual contact with our surroundings. In turn, we have to think of the justificatory status of beliefs as turning on what support these beliefs can provide, not exclusively on what supports these beliefs.

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[42] This norm differs from the kind of norm that McKinnon (2013) defends for assertion for her norm focuses on the reasons that support belief in a proposition whereas this norm focuses on whether a belief can provide reasons that support other things. As I think that some things are known without being based on reasons, I wouldn't want to introduce a norm that requires of each justified belief that it's supported by reasons.

[43] For further defenses of the view that knowledge is the fundamental epistemic norm, see Adler (2002), Littlejohn (2013), Sutton (2007), and Williamson (2000).

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