

# Are Perceptual Reasons the Objects of Perception?

J.J. Cunningham

*University of Warwick*

Perceptual experience provides us with knowledge.<sup>1</sup> But if we think that perception provides knowledge because it provides reasons on the basis of which we hold our perceptual beliefs then we end up facing the following puzzle. The reasons on the basis of which one believes that *p* are always to be identified with facts one already believes. But perceptual experience isn't a form of belief. So a belief based on a perceptual experience can never count as a belief held for a reason, in so far as it is based on experience.<sup>2</sup>

One way of solving the puzzle is to reject the claim that the reasons in the light of which one believes must always be identified with facts one already believes. And one way of doing that is to identify reasons on the basis of which one holds one's perceptual beliefs with the entities one perceives. Those entities are said to count as reasons for one's perceptual beliefs because they are truth-makers for those beliefs. On this view, one's perceptual experience provides one with knowledge by constituting one's awareness of reasons, thought of as the objects of one's perceptual awareness, which make true the propositions they are reasons to believe. I call this view *the Truth-Maker View*, or (TMV).<sup>3</sup>

(TMV) supplies a novel response to the puzzle, under-explored in the contemporary epistemological literature. This paper explores (TMV), contrasts it with a competing solution to the puzzle, and raises a problem for it: that the view cannot handle

---

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this paper I use the term 'perceptual experience' and its cognates to refer to veridical experiences such as episodes of seeing and hearing. On this usage, hallucinatory experiences do not count as perceptual experiences.

<sup>2</sup>The problem is an analogue of the problem Davidson (1986) raises concerning how it is possible for experience to provide justification.

<sup>3</sup>One finds a tentative defence of (TMV) in Kalderon (2011) and there is textual evidence in favour of ascribing it to Brewer (2011). Johnston (2006, 2011) ascribes an epistemic role to perceived truth-makers, but denies that they constitute evidence for perceptual beliefs. Perhaps he'd therefore want to deny that they are epistemic reasons as well, in which case his view is not (TMV) but close to it in spirit.

the rationalising-explanatory role played by reasons in general, and hence perceptual reasons in particular.

I will proceed as follows. In §1 I outline the puzzle to which (TMV) is best seen as a response. In §2 I outline (TMV), distinguishing between different versions of it, contrasting it with its competitor and saying something about what might motivate it. In §3 I raise the issue of what sense the proponent of (TMV) can make of the rationalising-explanatory role reasons for belief can play. I argue that once that explanatory role is properly understood, (TMV) faces a problem. Finally, §4 considers and rejects two objections to my argument against (TMV).

## 1 The Puzzle

The puzzle to which (TMV) is a response is generated by the conjunction of four theses. The first I call *Reasons Priority* and it says that perceptual knowledge is belief held in the light of perceptual reasons. The second I call *the Doxastic Thesis* and it says that believing for a reason requires that one believes the proposition which either is, or else represents, one's reason. The third I call *Belief-Independence* and it implies that experiences are not beliefs. The fourth I call *the Non-Inferential Thesis* and it says that perceptual knowledge is in a certain sense non-inferential. I investigate each thesis in turn, before describing how the conjunction of them gives rise to our puzzle.

I begin with *Reasons Priority*. Perceptual experience of entities in the environment provides us with knowledge of those entities. There is a red cube positioned on the desk before me and I know that the cube is red because I'm seeing the red cube before me. More generally, for a certain range of true propositions which are ways of thinking about what I'm perceiving, I can come to know the truth of each of those propositions because I'm having that perceptual experience.

It is also the case that perceptual experience provides us with reasons for belief. My visual perception of the red cube before me not only provides me with knowledge that the cube is red but provides me with a reason to believe that proposition too. The notion of a reason being used here is identical to that exploited by Scanlon (1998) and Dancy (2000), amongst many other metaethicists: a factor which speaks in favour of one's maintaining a certain attitude or performing a certain action, so that that attitude or action is something which one ought to maintain or do (at least *pro tanto*). I'll continue to use the term 'reason' and its cognates to refer to that sort of phenomenon. So to say that my visual perception provides me with a reason to believe that the cube is red is to say that there exists a reason in favour of me believing that the cube is red and my visual perception of the red cube, in some sense or other, provides me with that reason.

According to Reasons Priority, these two facts are connected. Reasons Priority says that perceptual knowledge that *p* consists in believing that *p* on the basis of a reason in favour of one's believing that *p*, which has been provided to one by one's perceptual experience. In a slogan: it is because perceptual experience provides one with reasons that it provides one with knowledge. It is not because perceptual experience constitutes (part of) a reliable belief forming process that it provides knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Nor is the propensity of perceptual experience to provide knowledge an explanatorily primitive affair.<sup>5</sup> And nor is it that perception provides one with reasons by providing one with knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Rather, perceptual experience has the power to generate knowledge because it has the power to provide us with reasons.

I now come to the Doxastic Thesis. Believing that *p* on the basis of a reason, *R*, requires that *R* is in some appropriate sense present to mind. Reasons that are out there in one's environment but which aren't in any sense items on which one has a perspective are simply not apt to function as reasons *for which* one believes that *p* - they cannot be *one's reasons* for belief (or action).

This point is in need of some minor refinement. Let's suppose that *p* itself can be a reason on the basis of which one believes that *p*. The requirement just described implies that in such cases, where one believes that *p* for the reason that *p*, *p* must be present to mind in some way or other. But in those cases the requirement looks to be vacuously satisfied just because one believes that *p*. How might we refine the requirement in order to take such cases into account?

The correct way to formulate the requirement is to say that when one believes that *p* for a reason, *R*, *R* is in some appropriate sense present to mind, but the mental state which constitutes the presence to mind of *R* is explanatorily prior to one's belief that *p*. When one believes that *p* on the basis of a reason, one is in the state of believing that *p* and one is also in some additional mental state which is directed onto one's reason. The second mental state is present prior to one's state of believing that *p* not in the sense of being temporally prior to one's belief that *p*, although it might be that too. Rather it's prior to one's belief that *p* in the sense that it is part of what explains why one believes that *p*, or else enables there to be an explanation of why one believes that *p*, but not the other way round. This requirement is not satisfied in cases in which *p* is the reason for which one believes that *p* just because one believes that *p*.

The Doxastic Thesis places a constraint on the way in which reasons must be present to mind prior to one's believing that *p* when one believes that *p* for a reason. It says

---

<sup>4</sup>This is of course the claim most readily associated with the Externalist tradition in epistemology.

<sup>5</sup>See Roessler (2009) for a defence of that claim.

<sup>6</sup>That would be the view associated with Williamson (2000).

that it is only mental states of *believing* directed onto one's reason that can function to constitute the presence to mind of reasons in the sense at issue. For any state that plays the role of being the state which constitutes the presence to mind of one's reason in the way required, that state is a belief. The Doxastic Thesis is one way of spelling out Davidson's famous slogan that nothing can count as a reason for belief except another belief.<sup>7</sup>

Why might one endorse the Doxastic Thesis? Here's one argument for it. Reasons are facts, typically about the external world. It is the fact that the lights are on in the neighbour's house that is a reason in favour of believing that they are home. It is the fact that the exit-poll predicts a victory for the Labour party at the by-election that's a reason in favour of believing that Labour will win, and so on. Believing for a reason involves, as I've noted, the presence to mind of one's reason. So believing for a reason requires the presence to mind of a certain fact. For a fact, F, to be present to mind is for one to hold some propositional attitude towards a true proposition, p, which either is, or is a mode of presentation of, F. Intuitively, not just any propositional attitude can do the job. Conative attitudes like desiring, wishing and hoping that p cannot play the role. Only cognitive attitudes – attitudes that represent p as true, instead of as to be made true – can play the role. But, again intuitively, not just any cognitive attitude can do the job. Supposing that p, regretting that p and imagining that p involve representing p as true but they cannot play the role of constituting the presence to mind of a certain fact in the way required for believing for a reason. The only type of cognitive attitude left on the scene once we've ruled out those cognitive attitudes is that of commitment to the truth of p, and commitment to the truth of p is just belief that p. So the Doxastic Thesis must be correct.<sup>8</sup>

This brings me to the third thesis that contributes to the puzzle: Belief-Independence. Belief-Independence says that if one has an experience which corresponds to p, it doesn't follow that one believes that p. Belief-Independence can be argued for by appeal to examples. If I have a visual perception of a red cube in front of me, it doesn't follow that I believe that the cube is red. It might be, for example, that I know I'm suffering an illusion or, if my experience is a perception, that I falsely believe that I'm suffering an illusion.

We get a puzzle if we add to the list the Non-Inferential Thesis. The Non-Inferential Thesis says that knowing that p by perception needn't involve any inference having been performed either implicitly or explicitly by the subject. There are cases of perceptual

---

<sup>7</sup>See Davidson (1986: 126).

<sup>8</sup>This argument echoes the argument explored by Pryor (2005) for a thesis he labels 'Only Beliefs', which is similar, if not identical, to the Doxastic Thesis. See also §2 of Ginsborg's contribution to this volume for further defence of the thesis.

knowledge where the subject's belief that *p* has not been inferred from any facts which they knew prior to *p*, for example facts about their perceptual experience such as that it appears to them as if *p*, or that they see that *p*. Rather, their belief that *p* is held because of their perceptual experience itself and it counts as knowledge just in so far as it is held because of experience.<sup>9</sup>

We now have our four theses in view. How does the conjunction of them generate a puzzle? Let's suppose that Reasons Priority is true. Thus, perceptual knowledge is identified with belief held on the basis of a perceptually provided reason. But now let's suppose that the Non-Inferential Thesis is true. Thus, a belief counts as perceptual knowledge because it is based on the perceptual experience itself. Putting Reasons Priority and the Non-Inferential Thesis together we get the result that a belief held on the basis of experience itself can be held on the basis of a reason, in so far as it is held on the basis of experience, and that is how it gets to count as knowledge.

But the claim that a belief held on the basis of an experiential state can count as a belief held on the basis of a reason, in so far as it is held on the basis of the experience, implies that the experiential state on which the belief is based constitutes the presence to mind of one's reason in the way required for believing for a reason. It should now be apparent why a puzzle arises. The Doxastic Thesis says that only states of believing can constitute the presence to mind of reasons in the way required for believing for a reason. Since the conjunction of Reasons Priority and the Non-Inferential Thesis entails that perceptual states themselves can play the role of constituting the presence to mind of reasons in the way at issue it would have to follow that experiential states are states of believing. But Belief-Independence rules out precisely that.

If we're to avoid scepticism about perceptual knowledge we'll have to respond to the puzzle by dropping one of the four theses. Belief-Independence looks impeccable.<sup>10</sup> The Non-Inferential Thesis is also plausible, not least because it constitutes the most effective response to Regress Scepticism.<sup>11</sup> That just leaves Reasons Priority and the Doxastic Thesis. I simply assume in this paper that Reasons Priority is true. My interest is in how we might solve the problem whilst cleaving to Reasons Priority, however that thesis is to be motivated exactly. Thus, the next section examines two ways of defending Reasons Priority by rejecting the Doxastic Thesis and goes on to focus on one way of doing so: (TMV).

---

<sup>9</sup>It is consistent with the claim that perceptual knowledge is non-inferential in this sense that beliefs, even those with which have the status of knowledge, play an enabling role with respect to the capacity of experience to provide knowledge, as, for example, McDowell (1996) says.

<sup>10</sup>Although see Glüer (2009) for a rejection of it.

<sup>11</sup>I take it that Coherentists such as Davidson (1986) and Bonjour (1985) would solve the puzzle by rejecting the Non-Inferential Thesis.

## 2 Two ways of Solving the Puzzle

If the puzzle is to be solved by rejecting the Doxastic Thesis whilst cleaving to the other three theses then something will have to be said about how it is that experience-based belief gets to be belief held for a reason, even though experiences are not themselves beliefs. Moreover, something will have to be said about how the argument rehearsed above for the Doxastic Thesis goes wrong. I want to contrast, in §2.1, two distinct ways of carrying out those tasks: the Content Model and the Truth-Maker View, and I will go on, in §2.2, to elaborate the latter.

### 2.1 Perceptual Reasons: Content vs. Objects

According to one tradition in the metaphysics of perception, we should think of the state of mind one is in when one has a perceptual experience as having representational content: when one has an experience the mental state one is in represents one's environment to be the way in which things appear to one to be, in so far as one is having the experience. In this respect, the state one is in when one has a perceptual experience is supposed to be analogous to the state one is in when one believes, imagines, or desires something to be the case about the external world.

On one version of this approach, we're to think of the state as a propositional attitude of a certain kind: we're to think of it as a matter of representing as true, in a distinctive sort of way, a set of propositions about the perceptible environment which map the way the environment seems to one to be, in so far as one is having the experience. Since what it is as issue is *perceptual* experience, moreover, the set of propositions in question will be *true*, so that one's experience is *accurate*.<sup>12</sup>

This metaphysical story about perceptual experience, on its propositional elaboration, can be utilised in providing a solution to our epistemic puzzle. For, with that picture in the background, one can say that one's perceptual reason on the basis of which one believes that *p* is identical to the true proposition *p* itself, *qua* content of one's experience. Experience constitutes the presence to mind of reasons in the sense required for believing for a reason just because the reasons in question are identified with the content of one's experience. The Doxastic Thesis is rejected because experiential representation is acknowledged to be belief-independent. The premise of the argument for the Doxastic Thesis which is rejected is the claim that the only cognitive propositional attitude left on the list after we've eliminated imagining, regretting, supposing, and so on, is

---

<sup>12</sup>For versions of the basic metaphysical picture being described which do not construe representational content propositionally, see Peacocke (1983) and Crane (2009).

believing. Experiential representing is a cognitive attitude left on the list, and that can do the job of constituting the presence to mind of one's reasons in the way required.<sup>13</sup> This epistemological story is what I will call *the Content Model*.

I'm going to focus on a different way of resolving the puzzle open to the proponent of Reasons Priority that doesn't require the ascription of content to experience. On this view, when one perceives a certain denizen of the external world one stands in a relation of perceptual awareness to that entity. That entity itself is identified with the reason in favour of one's believing that p, on the basis of which one believes that p. The entity in question counts as a reason in favour of believing that p because it is a truth-maker for the proposition p. One's perceptual experience is said to constitute the presence to mind of one's reason in the way required for believing for a reason just because it involves one's standing in the relation of perceptual awareness to the perceived entity that is one's reason. Perceptual reasons are present to mind in the appropriate way just by being perceived, not by being propositions that constitute the contents of representational states. This is the Truth-Maker View, or (TMV).

The proponent of (TMV) is, controversially, committed to the existence of truth-makers for the sorts of contingently true propositions which can be known by perception. For my purposes, I can understand a truth-maker for p to be some entity such that necessarily, if that entity exists then p is true.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the proponent of (TMV) identifies perceptual reasons with perceived entities the existence of which guarantees the truth of the propositions they are reasons to believe. They suggest that it is because those entities stand in such a modal relation to the truth of perceptually knowable propositions that they count as reasons in favour of believing them. It should be noted that although I will be utilising the modal conception of truth-making described, it is not essential to the argument against (TMV) to be promoted later, nor to (TMV) itself, that we conceive of truth-making in that way. If the reader prefers an alternative conception of truth-making, they are free to substitute it for the modal conception I take for granted.<sup>15</sup>

I've said that the proponent of (TMV) needn't ascribe content to experience. But it seems to me that (TMV) is consistent with the thought that experience involves being in

---

<sup>13</sup>There is textual evidence for thinking that a version of this view is endorsed by McDowell (1996, 1999, 2006), but in fact I do not think that it is his view, for he explicitly rejects it in McDowell (2006). Rather, his view is that one's perceptual reason is that one is perceiving the entity in question, a truth which nevertheless is also part of the content of one's experience. Versions of the Content Model can, however, be confidently ascribed to Brewer (1999) and to Schroeder (2008, 2011).

<sup>14</sup>See Dodd (1999) and Kalderon (2011) for this conception of truth-making. See Rodriguez-Pereyra (2005) for an alternative.

<sup>15</sup>Indeed, it might be better for the proponent of (TMV) to opt for a more demanding conception of truth-making, in order to avoid the obvious worry that one cannot come to know any, or at least many, necessary truths off the back of experience. I ignore this complication in what follows for the sake of simplicity.

a state with representational content, too. What it is inconsistent with is the thought that we should identify perceptual reasons with certain propositions, whether or not those propositions are identified with the content of experience. It is also inconsistent with the thought that perceptual reasons are present to mind in the way required for believing for a reason by being the content of experiential representational states.

This brings me to the issue of how to motivate (TMV). Both (TMV) and the Content Model can be motivated by the thought that they enable the avoidance of the puzzle described above in a way that's consistent with Reasons Priority. But why should the puzzle be resolved by appeal to (TMV), instead of to the Content Model? The answer to this is that (TMV) provides us with a way of resolving the puzzle, consistently with Reasons Priority, either (a) without having to ascribe representational content to experience at all or at least (b) without having to ascribe an epistemic role to content, if we are to ascribe content to experience. So although (TMV) is *consistent* with the thought that experience has content, it is essential to motivating (TMV) over the Content Model that either experience does not in fact have content or that, if it does, then the content of experience does no work in the epistemological story we tell about perception. If it turns out that, properly developed, (TMV) requires that we assign a role to content in the epistemological story, then it will not be a theory which is well motivated against its competitor.

So far, I've introduced and contrasted the Content Model with (TMV) and I've made a suggestion about what the motivating (TMV) over its rival depends on. In the following subsection I want to go focus on (TMV) alone and explore some of its details, in order to offer a more precise conception of it.

## 2.2 The Truth-Maker View Elaborated

(TMV) says that we're to think of the psychological link between oneself and one's perceptual reason as consisting in the relation of perceptual awareness which holds between oneself and the entity one is perceiving. That entity is one's perceptual reason for belief, by dint of making true the proposition in question. One question to be addressed by the proponent of (TMV) is this: with what should we identify perceived truth-makers and hence with perceptual reasons? There are at least as many versions of (TMV) as there are answers to that question.

Well, it is plausible that truths – by which I mean true propositions – are not amongst the objects of perception: when I see the red cube I do not see the true proposition that the cube is red, rather I see the cube itself as well as certain of its properties. Moreover, true propositions are not truth-makers. Propositions, I am assuming here, are



truth-evaluable *ways of thinking* about the world which are composed of Fregean senses and are hence finely individuated in the familiar Fregean manner. Truth-makers are the denizens of external reality which make such ways of thinking true. So the proponent of (TMV) will not wish to identify perceptual reasons with truths – this is partly what ensures the contrast with the Content Model. Instead, they will want to identify perceptual reasons with coarsely individuated denizens of the external world which true propositions are ways of thinking about. With this in mind, here is a list of the main options open to the proponent of (TMV):

*State-of-Affairs-(TMV)*. Perceived truth-makers, and hence perceptual reasons, should in every case be identified with some perceived state of affairs. When I believe that the cube is red on the basis of my visual perception, it is the state of affairs of the cube's being red that is my reason.

*Event-(TMV)*. Perceived truth-makers, and hence perceptual reasons, should in every case be identified with some perceived event. When I believe that the cube is red on the basis of my visual perception, my reason is some event or other I perceive, presumably the static event of the cube's continuing to be red throughout the period of my perceiving it.<sup>16</sup>

*Object-(TMV)*. Perceived truth-makers, and hence perceptual reasons, should be identified in every case with some perceived object. When I believe that the cube is red on the basis of my visual perception, my reason is the cube.

*Property-(TMV)*. Perceived truth-makers, and hence perceptual reasons, should be identified in every case with some perceived property instance, whether an intrinsic or a relational property. When I believe that the cube is red on the basis of my visual perception, my reason is the instance of redness inhering in the facing surface of the cube.

*Pluralist-(TMV)*. Perceived truth-makers, and hence perceptual reasons, can be identified with entities belonging to some combination of the ontological categories identified above. On this view, it might be that perceptual reasons can be both objects and events. Or it might be that perceptual reasons can be both property instances and states of affairs, and so on.

I want to spend some time elaborating on each of these options, in order to convey a sense of what would be required in order to properly develop (TMV), beginning

---

<sup>16</sup>It is assumed that there are such things as static events here, controversial though that is.

with State-of-Affairs-(TMV). For my purposes I can understand states of affairs in Armstrong's (1997) way. For Armstrong, a state of affairs is a *sui generis* type of entity which exists if, and only if, a particular, O, instantiates some property F: the state of affairs of O's being F exists if and only if O is F. The state of affairs of O's being F is constituted by O and by F-ness, thought of as a universal instantiated by O. We invoke the existence of the state of affairs of O's being F in order to explain what it is for O to instantiate F-ness: for O to instantiate F-ness is just for there to be in existence the state of affairs of O's being F. It is not controversial that if there are such things as states of affairs, they can function as truth-makers for the sorts of propositions knowable by perception. If the state of affairs of O's being F exists, that guarantees that it's true that O is F, where that O is F can be known by perception. State-of-Affairs-(TMV) is thus a live option for the proponent of (TMV).<sup>17</sup>

In order to get Event-(TMV) off the ground it would have to be shown that perceived events can be truth-makers for the sorts of propositions knowable by perception. It would have to be shown that the occurrence of the relevant perceived event necessitates the truth of the corresponding perceptually knowable proposition. For example, it would have to be shown that the occurrence of the event of the bomb exploding necessitates the truth of the proposition that the bomb has exploded. And, to take an example closer to our concerns, it would have to be shown that the static event of the cube's continuing to be red throughout the interval of time perceived can have occurred only if it's true that the cube is red. Whether events can play this role depends on how they are individuated. The proponent of (TMV) will need to think that, for any subject-predicate proposition which can be made true by the occurrence of a particular event, it is essential to that event that the particular in question instantiates the relevant property.<sup>18</sup>

In order to get Object-(TMV) off the ground it would have to be shown that perceived objects can be truth-makers for the sorts of propositions knowable by perception. Here one might reasonably think that the proponent of Object-(TMV) faces a problem. That's because the perceived truth-maker for the proposition that the cube is red is identified by the proponent of Object-(TMV) with the red cube itself, and the cube is only contingently red. Perhaps there is some conception of objects, or of truth-making distinct from the one employed here, which would be of help to the proponent of Object-(TMV) with respect to this problem.

In order to get Property-(TMV) off the ground, the proponent of the view will have to commit themselves to the claim that property instances are particulars, instead of

---

<sup>17</sup>See Textor (2012) for a different conception of states of affairs, on which they are not fit to play the role of truth-makers.

<sup>18</sup>For a defence of the claim that events can be truth-makers, as well as the claim that events can be facts, see Longworth ("Surveying the Facts").

universals – they’ll have to think of them as *tropes*. That’s because if the redness of the cube is to be thought of as a truth-maker for the proposition that the cube is red, it needs to be thought of as an entity the existence of which necessitates the truth of the proposition that the cube is red. But it cannot do that if it is a repeatable entity; it cannot do that if the redness of the cube is identical to the redness of the post-box, for then it could exist yet be false that the cube is red. Instead, the instance of redness needs to be thought of as a particular, unrepeatable entity inhering in the surface of the cube.<sup>19</sup> Not only that, but the proponent of Property(TMV) must also think of tropes as *non-transferable*. A particular trope is transferable just in case the trope could exist even though it is not instantiated by the particular it is in fact instantiated by. A trope is non-transferable just in case the identity of the trope is tied to the particular that instantiates it – just in case the trope in question is such that one couldn’t transfer it from one particular to another without the trope thereby ceasing to exist. If the redness of the cube is to count as necessitating the truth of the proposition that the cube is red, then it must be such that if it exists then it’s true that the cube is red. The redness of the cube can have that profile only if it is non-transferable.<sup>20</sup>

What all of this brings out is that the proponent of (TMV), in whatever version, must undertake some significant ontological commitments in order to get their theory off the ground. The different versions of the view explored will variously have to commit themselves to the existence of state of affairs, a certain demanding conception of event individuation, a certain conception of objects or truth-making, and to a certain demanding conception of properties, if they are to be at all viable. One way of putting pressure on (TMV) is to question such ontological commitments. I do not pursue that issue here, instead I have merely intended to offer the reader a sense of what it would take to be a proponent of the theory.

I’m now in a position to come back to an issue which I left open earlier: the question of which premise or premises of the argument for the Doxastic Thesis proponents of (TMV) wish to deny. Proponents of Event, Object and Property-(TMV) can respond to the argument by denying the claim that reasons are facts. The proponent of State-of-Affairs-(TMV) will likely not deny that premise of the argument. But the denial of any other premises of the argument is consistent with any version of (TMV), it seems to me. Proponents of (TMV), then, have several options open to them with respect to how to undermine the Doxastic Thesis.

Mark Kalderon (2011) tentatively endorses (TMV):<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>For a critique of trope theory see Daly (1997). For a defence of the thought that we should identify truth-makers with tropes, see Mulligan, Simons, and Smith (1984).

<sup>20</sup>For an argument for the transferability of tropes see Dodd (1999).

<sup>21</sup>Kalderon only tentatively supports the picture because he only tentatively supports Reasons Priority.

On this conception, the yellowish red of the tomato is a reason for thinking that the tomato is not quite ripe. Note well, it is the yellowish red of the tomato, and not my seeing that the tomato is yellowish red, nor my believing that the tomato is yellowish red, which is a reason. The yellowish red of the tomato lacks a propositional structure – it is a particular, a property instance. It is spatially distant from me – the yellowish red inheres in the opaque surface of the tomato a meter away and inherits its location from the surface in which it inheres. It is an aspect of how things are independently of me. The yellowish red of the tomato is a reason that warrants judging that the tomato is yellowish red. Indeed, in this instance, there could be no better reason – the yellowish red of the tomato warrants judging that the tomato is red because the former makes true the latter. (Kalderon, 2011: 227)

Of course, in order for the yellowish red of the tomato to rationally bear on what I am to think, it must be cognitively accessible. But that is what perception does for me – perception makes me aware of what reasons there are. (*Ibid.*)

In Kalderon's example, the subject visually attends to the yellowish red hue of a newly ripened tomato. The hue is a particular property instance inhering in the tomato. It is a truth-maker for the proposition that the tomato is red and hence counts as a reason for believing that proposition. It is because experience provides one with perceptual awareness of a certain property instance, here identified with one's perceptual reason, that it provides one with knowledge. Kalderon is happy to allow that property instances can count as perceptible truth-makers. His view could either be Property-(TMV) or Pluralist-(TMV), depending on whether he would allow that perceptual reasons can sometimes be something other than property instances.

There is some evidence that Bill Brewer (2011) subscribes to (TMV) and in the following passage Brewer seems to identify perceptual reasons not with property instances, but with objects:

[P]erceptual experience consists most fundamentally in conscious acquaintance...with mind-independent physical objects themselves. Those very objects constitute reasons for the correctness of the application of certain empirical concepts in judgement. Thus, when a person is visually presented with a given mind-independent physical object, *o*, that is *F*...she

---

See Kalderon (2011: 227).

is consciously acquainted with the very reason for applying the concept ‘*F*’... (Brewer, 2011: 156)

Suppose that *o* is *F*, for an appropriate ‘*F*’ that can be known on the basis of vision, say. Thus, given what ‘*F*’ means, *o* makes application of ‘*F*’ correct: *o* itself is what makes ‘*o* is *F*’ true and in this sense constitutes a reason to apply the predicate. The crux of the epistemological account that I propose... is that conscious acquaintance with *o* in vision, say, therefore normally makes application of ‘*F*’ in judgement *evidently* correct for a subject who grasps the concept *F*... This, I contend, explains the contribution of perceptual experience to perceptual knowledge: experience acquaints us with the grounds for empirical truth. (*Ibid.*: 142-143)

Brewer’s view as stated here is either Object-(TMV) or Pluralist-(TMV), depending on whether he would allow that perceptual reasons can sometimes be something other than objects.

It’s worth noting that both Brewer and Kalderon share a commitment to a Naïve Realist conception of perceptual experience, according to which we are to think of the perceiving relation as a non-representational, *sui generis* type of perceptual acquaintance relation in terms of which we’re supposed to at least partly account for the phenomenal character of experience. Is a commitment to Naïve Realism requires for (TMV)? Again, it doesn’t seem to me that (TMV) requires Naïve Realism. However, given that what motivates (TMV) is a desire to account for the epistemology of perception without appealing to the notion of representational content, Naïve Realism is a metaphysics of perception which coheres well with the epistemology offered by (TMV).

### 3 The Explanatory Exclusion Argument

Having offered a sense of what (TMV) amounts to in greater detail, I now turn to the evaluation of it. We’ve already come across one way of evaluating it: by putting pressure on the ontological commitments of each version of the view. In this section I pursue a different tactic: that of focusing on what sense the proponent of (TMV) can make of the rationalising-explanatory role of reasons for belief.

I begin with a statement of the argument against (TMV) I want to defend, which I call the *Explanatory Exclusion Argument*:

(P1) If S believes that *p* for the reason that *R* then S’s belief that *p* is subject to a rationalising explanation which has *R* as its *explanans*.

(P2) The *explanantia* of rationalising explanations are truths.

---

(C) If S believes that p for the reason that R then R is a truth.

The conclusion of the argument is effectively that the reasons for which one believes that p are always true propositions, understood in the Fregean way described above. It follows that one's reasons for perceptual beliefs are always true propositions, conceived of in that way, too. As we have seen, we do not perceive truths and truths are not apt to function as truth-makers, so (TMV) is inconsistent with the conclusion of the argument. The argument is valid, so my task is to prove that each of its premises are true. I take each premise in turn.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1 In Defence of (P1)

In order to assess the truth of (P1) something needs to be said about what a rationalising explanation is. Agent's engage in actions and hold attitudes. At least sometimes, agents perform actions or hold attitudes *for reasons*: they will act or maintain an attitude in response to the reasons there are for them to do so. When an agent performs an action or holds an attitude for a reason, there is a distinctive kind of explanation why to which their action or attitude is subject. Such explanations make it intelligible why the agent acts or holds the attitude by appealing to some condition which, in some sense or other, specifies what can be said in favour of the performance of the action or the maintenance of the attitude from the agent's own point of view. Following Davidson (1963), we can call these explanations *rationalising explanations*.

(P1) of the Explanatory Exclusion Argument effectively says that if a subject believes something for a reason then: (a) their belief is subject to a rationalising explanation and (b) the rationalising explanation in question takes the subject's reason for belief as its *explanans*. Now, it seems to me that believing for a reason requires (a), because, in general, performing an action or holding an attitude *for a reason* partly consists in that action or attitude being subject to a rationalising explanation. So the question of whether (P1) is true reduces to the question of whether (b) is true.

At this point philosophers such as Davidson and his followers will demur. They will say that rationalising explanations always take the form of explanations which appeal to the psychological states of the subject which constitute the appearance of reasons to them. If this were right, rationalising explanations would always appeal, not to reasons

---

<sup>22</sup>It's worth noting that the Explanatory Exclusion Argument is effective against any view which denies that reasons for perceptual belief are truths, whether the truth-making relation is invoked to explain what it is for such entities to be reasons or not.

themselves, but to narrowly supervening states of mind which constitute it seeming to the subject as if some factor is a reason in favour of their performing the relevant action or holding the relevant attitude. If this view is correct, then, using ‘ $\psi$ -R’ as a variable for any narrowly supervening psychological state which can play the role of constituting the appearance of reasons to the subject, all explanations of the rationalising form would have to look like this:

( $\psi$ ) S believes that p because S is in  $\psi$ -R

If all rationalising explanations were of the ( $\psi$ ) form, then when a subject believes that p for the reason that q, where q is functioning as their reason by dint of their believing that q and by dint of their having inferred p from q, the rationalising explanation to which their belief that p is subject would have to look like this:

( $\psi$ -B) S believes that p because S believes that q

And if it were to be allowed that sensory experiences could play the role of constituting the presence to mind of reasons – something which proponents of the Doxastic Thesis like Davidson would deny – then the rationalising explanation to which one’s perceptual belief is subject would have to appeal to a narrowly supervening experiential state which has one’s perceptual reason as its object or as its content.

The proponent of (P1) of the Explanatory Exclusion Argument departs from this conception of rationalising explanation. Instead, they insist that when one acts or holds an attitude in response to a reason, the very item which is the reason to which one is responding is the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which one’s act or attitude is subject: the elements of the mind-independent world which are the reasons to which one responds themselves explain why one is so responding. Whatever mental state the subject is in which constitutes the appearance of their reason to them is not part of the *explanans* of the explanation, but rather plays the role of an enabling condition for the reason itself to explain why the subject acts or holds the relevant attitude. So rationalising explanations of why a subject believes that p for a reason would rather look like this, where R is the subject’s reason:

( $\neg\psi$ ) S believes that p because R

In the inferential case considered, R would be identical to q and the subject’s belief that q would be playing the role of enabling its content to be the *explanans* of the explanation. And if it were allowed that sensory experience could play the role of constituting

the presence to mind of reasons, then the rationalising explanation to which one's perceptual belief is subject would have to appeal just to the content or the object of the state of experience. The state of experience itself would have to be said to be playing the role of enabling that content or object to in turn play the role of *explanans* in the relevant rationalising explanation.

The proponent of the conception of rationalising explanation encapsulated by (P1) will not deny that one form which rationalising explanation can take is a form which appeals to states which constitute the appearance of reasons to their subject. That sort of rationalising explanation is available, for example, in cases in which the subject has made a mistake about what reasons there are, so that they don't count as acting or holding their attitude for the reason that *p* at all, even though it seems to them as if they do. Rather, what they will say is that when one does succeed in acting or holding an attitude in response to a genuine reason, there is a kind of rationalising explanation available which essentially makes one's act or attitude intelligible by appeal to the reason itself, which will typically be some external-world entity to which one's belief or, if the Doxastic Thesis is false, one's experience, is directed. The mental states just mentioned enable that special sort of explanation to obtain, they are not part of its *explanans*.

Why should we prefer the sort of anti-psychologistic conception of rationalising explanation encapsulated by (P1) over the sort of purely psychologistic conception of rationalising explanation preferred by Davidson? Providing decisive support for the former is something for which I do not have space here, but I want to make a comment which serves to shift the onus of proof onto proponents of the Psychologistic alternative, thus rendering (P1) itself a claim which has the status of innocent until proven guilty.

If all rationalising explanations are of the ( $\psi$ ) form, then this would imply that the reasons in favour of our actions and beliefs are explanatorily epiphenomenal with respect to the acts or attitudes they favour. Although a reason might exist, favouring an act or attitude available to one, and one might recognise its presence and so act or maintain the attitude accordingly, if the psychologistic conception is right, then those reasons nevertheless do not explain why one reacts in the way one does in such circumstances. It is always merely the appearance of reasons which explains. If the reasons really are there, over and above the appearance of them, then this will be incidental from the explanatory point of view. But this is surely not the way it is from the subject's own point of view. From the subject's own point of view when they react to a reason, they are acting or maintaining a relevant attitude in so far as there is a normative reason present, and how else should we interpret this than as the thought that from the subject's own point of view, the reason is what is explaining why they act or hold the relevant attitude. So we're pre-philosophically committed, it seems, to thinking that ( $\neg\psi$ ) explanations



are acceptable. Given that, this would make the psychologicistic view an error theory of an element of our ordinary thinking about these matters. Thus, the anti-psychologicistic position should be our default view, and with it, (P1).

### 3.2 First Argument in Defence of (P2)

(P2) of the Explanatory Exclusion Argument makes an ontological claim about the *explanantia* of the rationalising explanations described by (P1): they are always true propositions, thought of as finely individuated ways of thinking about the world. I want to offer two considerations in favour of (P2): one which appeals to our ordinary practice of providing explanations and a second consideration which appeals to certain special features of rationalising explanations in particular. The first is offered momentarily, the second in §3.3.

Let's suppose that (TMV) is true. Given that (P1) is true, it would follow that when I come to know that the cube is red off the back of my seeing the red cube before me my belief that the cube is red is subject to a rationalising explanation which takes some perceived truth-making entity as its *explanans*. What the explanation will look like precisely depends on which of the versions of (TMV) explored above is true. With that in mind, here are the options, where the instances of 'because' are rationalising:

- (1<sub>s</sub>) S believes that the cube is red because of the cube's being red
- (1<sub>e</sub>) S believes that the cube is red because of the cube's continuing to be red
- (1<sub>o</sub>) S believes that the cube is red because of the red cube
- (1<sub>p</sub>) S believes that the cube is red because of the redness of the cube

These are how the rationalising explanation to which my belief is subject would have to be modelled by the proponent of State-of-Affairs-(TMV), Event-(TMV), Object-(TMV) and Property-(TMV) respectively, given the truth of the conception of rationalising explanation encapsulated by (P1). In each case, the entity is said to play the rationalising-explanatory role by dint of being the object of the perceiving relation. If, as I think, however, the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation of my belief should instead be identified with a truth, then the explanation will have to look like this:

- (1<sub>t</sub>) S believes that the cube is red because the cube is red

This is equivalent to: 'what explains why S believes that the cube is red is that the cube is red', where the that-clause of the latter designates the true proposition that the

cube is red. On my preferred view, (1<sub>s</sub>)–(1<sub>p</sub>) could be true at all only if they are elliptical for (1<sub>t</sub>).

Now, what I want to suggest is that ordinary, non-rationalising explanations why which seem to appeal to particulars – by which I mean events, objects and property instances, but not states of affairs – are best construed as being elliptical for explanations which appeal to either truths about such particulars or at least to states of affairs involving them. This suffices to demonstrate that *explanantia* of explanations why in general, and hence of rationalising explanations in particular, cannot be particulars. But this doesn't quite get us (P2), for it remains left open that such *explanantia* are states of affairs. I go on to suggest that reflection on examples of rationalising explanations in particular reveals that the *explanantia* of those sorts of explanations, at least, cannot be states of affairs. This suffices to rule it out that *explanantia* of rationalising explanations could be states of affairs too, and that leaves only the option that they are truths, as (P2) says.

What pressure is there to think that ordinary, non-rationalising explanations why which seem to appeal to particulars cannot really do so if they are to be true at all? Consider the following examples of explanatory statements which appear to appeal to particulars:

- (2<sub>e</sub>) The widow is in mourning because of the death
- (2<sub>o</sub>) The house is on fire because of the candle
- (2<sub>p</sub>) The man is covering his ears because of the loudness

The explanatory sentences that make up the (2) series provide only very sparse characterisations of the event, object and property instance each appeals to as its *explanans*. How should we understand them? I suggest that there are two ways of reading them. On the one hand, we can read them not as reporting explanations, but as statements to the effect that there is some explanation available of the relevant phenomenon which involves the relevant particular. On this way of reading them, they assert the presence of an explanation and tell us that the explanation in question appeals in some way to a certain particular, but they do not report those explanations. On the other hand, we can read them as reporting explanations, but if they are to intelligibly count as doing so then we must construe them as elliptical for explanations the specification of which involve a more full-blooded characterisation of the relevant particulars; for example, we must construe them as elliptical for:

- (2\*<sub>e</sub>) The widow is in mourning because her husband died
- (2\*<sub>o</sub>) The house is on fire because the lit candle was placed too close to the curtains

(2\*<sub>p</sub>) The man is covering his ears because the sound coming from the speakers is loud

The lesson to take from this is that if particulars are to be appealed to in explanations why then there is a constraint on how those particulars are to be characterised by sentences reporting such explanations, if those sentences are to intelligibly count as reporting explanations at all. If this constraint isn't met, then the only way of interpreting the relevant sentence will be as asserting merely that there is an explanation present involving the particular in some way, without reporting the explanation in question.

What I suggest this reveals is that particulars cannot play the role of *explanantia*. That's because if explanations appeal to particulars *tout court* then we should be able to make ready sense of the idea that the members of the (2) series provide genuine explanations, without having to think of them as being elliptical for the (2\*) explanations. If particulars themselves, and not states of affairs involving them or truths about them, are to count as *explanantia*, then there should be no constraint on how those particulars are to be characterised by any sentence reporting the explanation that appeals to them which would need to be met in order for the sentence to intelligibly count as reporting an explanation at all.

The upshot of this is that events, objects, and property instances cannot be the *explanantia* of explanations why and hence of rationalising explanations.<sup>23</sup> But this doesn't quite get me (P2), for that premise also rules it out that states of affairs can be the *explanantia* of rationalising explanations. However, reflection on some particular examples of rationalising explanations brings out that states of affairs couldn't be the *explanantia* of such explanations. Consider the following:

(3a) The man reached for the glass because there is water in it

(3b) She is visiting York because her beloved uncle lives there

The question that we need to address is: do the members of the (3) series appeal to states of affairs as *explanantia*? Well, (3a) and (3b) report rationalising explanations. The very same explanations are reported by the following sentences, which mean the same as (3a) and (3b):

(3a\*) The man reached for the glass for the reason that there is water in it

(3b\*) She is visiting York for the reason that her beloved uncle lives there

Now let's suppose that the that-clauses which appear in (3a\*) and (3b\*) refer to states of affairs instead of to truths. Then, given that (3a\*) and (3b\*) are true, it would have to be the case that the following are true too:

<sup>23</sup>Ruben (2012: 142-150) develops a different argument against the view that *explanantia* are events.

(3a') The man reached for the glass for the reason that there is H<sub>2</sub>O in it

(3b') She is visiting York for the reason that the head of the North Yorkshire Freemasons lives there

For, with respect to (3a), the state of affairs of there being water in the glass is identical to the state of affairs of there being H<sub>2</sub>O in the glass, and, with respect to (3b), the state of affairs of her beloved uncle living in York is identical to the state of affairs of the head of the North Yorkshire Freemasons living there – they are one and the same man. The problem is, of course, that (3a\*) and (3b\*) could be true even if (3a') and (3b') are false. That's because the man who reaches for the glass of water might not be aware that water is H<sub>2</sub>O and the woman visiting her uncle might not be aware of his status as a Freemason.

What this reveals is that we cannot identify the *explanantia* of rationalising explanations with states of affairs. But states of affairs are the only option other than truths, given that we have independently ruled it out that particulars can function as *explanantia*. Hence we must conclude that truths are the *explanantia* of rationalising explanations, just as (P2) says.

The argument which has been presented here is an eliminative disjunction: *explanantia* of rationalising explanations are either particulars, states of affairs, or truths; they are not particulars or states of affairs; so: they are truths. But it's worth noting that the reasoning that is intended to rule out the states of affairs option provides us with a more direct route to the conclusion, for, I think, the only way to account for the intensionality of (3a) and (3b) is by appeal to the claim that the *explanantia* of the explanations specified are truths.

### 3.3 Second Argument in Defence of (P2)

The first argument in favour of (P2) appeals to certain linguistic considerations. The second argument focuses on a constraint which must be met in order for an explanation to count as a rationalising explanation, as opposed to an explanation of a different form. What I'm going to suggest is that the constraint at issue requires the *explanantia* of such explanations to be truths.

In order to bring out the constraint I have in mind, I want to consider the following passage from Dancy (2004):

An intentional action, we are told, cannot occur in the absence of a pair of distinct states in the agent, one a belief one a desire, which states are to

function as causes. But not just this: there is the further requirement that the belief and the desire be somehow ‘appropriate’ to each other; we must have an ‘appropriate’ pairing if we are to have the sort of explanation of action that the Humeans conceive themselves to be talking about. What this means is that an explanation of someone’s taking the bus that appeals to his wanting to get to the market and believing that the bus is a convenient way of getting there is a good explanation of the Humean sort. A bad explanation of the Humean sort would be one that explained an action of putting on one’s hat because one believes that it is raining and wants to wear a hat if it is not raining. The latter, we are told, is *no* explanation, because the belief and the desire are not appropriately related. (Dancy, 2004: 30-31)

Dancy focuses on rationalising explanations of action as they are conceived by, what he labels, *Humeans*. For our purposes, we can take the Humean to say that all rationalising explanations of action take the ( $\psi$ ) form but where, the relevant mental states are identified with a belief/pro-attitude pair. Dancy’s thought is that in order for an explanation of action of the ( $\psi$ ) form to count as a rationalising explanation, it must be that the *explanans* of the explanation takes a set of psychological states which link-up in the appropriate way with the action. That is why one cannot provide a rationalising explanation of why I’m sipping coffee right now by appeal to a desire to keep myself alert plus a belief that drinking coffee will not keep me alert, or by appeal to that desire plus a belief that has nothing to do with my coffee drinking.

Although Dancy focuses on actions here, what he says can be readily generalised to beliefs. Once generalised the thought would be that an explanation of why an agent believes that *p* of the ( $\psi$ ) form could only count as a rationalising explanation if it appealed to states of mind which link-up in the appropriate sort of way to the belief which is to be explained. One could not provide a rationalising explanation of why I believe that green tomatoes are unripe by appeal to my belief that greenness is a sign of over-ripeness in fruit, or by appeal to an entirely irrelevant belief that I have, for example.

This raises the question: what must the relationship be between the mental states which are invoked to explain as part of a ( $\psi$ ) explanation and the *explanandum* of the explanation? Well, part of the answer here seems to me to be that those states need to be constitutive of it being the case that from the subject’s own point of view there is something to be said in favour of their performing the relevant action or maintaining the relevant attitude. Given that I believe that greenness is a sign of over-ripeness in fruit, it does not follow that there is anything to be said, from my own point of view, in favour of believing that green tomatoes are unripe – quite the opposite, in fact – and

it is at least partly because of this that the former cannot be invoked in a rationalising explanation of the latter. What this brings out is that there is a constraint which must be met by any rationalising explanation of the ( $\psi$ ) form in order for it to count so much as a rationalising explanation: it must appeal to states which are constitutive of it appearing to the subject as if there is a reason to engage in the activity or attitude corresponding to the *explanandum*.

But now I want to ask the question: can states of mind which do not take truths as content meet the constraint on rationalising *explanantia* of the ( $\psi$ ) form just specified? I don't think so. To see why, suppose we are told that a subject is looking at a glass of freshly poured water on the desk in front of them. Let us suppose that this isn't a matter of representing to be true a finely individuated proposition about the world, but is a matter of standing in a non-representational relation of awareness to the glass and its content. Moreover, suppose we are told that that state of mind constitutes the appearance of a reason to believe the (true) proposition *that there is a glass of water on the desk* to the subject. Well, to this we can ask the question: what is it about the experience which ensures that it constitutes the appearance of a reason to believe *that very proposition*, as opposed to other propositions which the subject possesses no perceptual reason to believe, such as *that there is a glass of H<sub>2</sub>O on the desk*, or *that the container bought by S last January contains water*, or any proposition which is a member of the innumerable large set which are equally accurate ways of thinking about what's seen? If what's experienced is not presented by the experience in a way that is as fine-grained as the proposition or propositions which the experience supposedly constitutes the possession of a reason to believe, then it is not intelligible how the experience could constitute the appearance of a reason to believe *those very propositions* and not innumerable others, from the point of view of the subject. Thus, only states of mind which take propositions as content can be the *explanantia* of rationalising explanations of the ( $\psi$ ) form, given the constraint derived from Dancy.

What we have so far is that rationalising explanations of the ( $\psi$ ) form need to appeal to mental states which take truths as content if they're to count as rationalising explanations. But how does this get us to the truth of (P2)? Well I think that Dancy's point about explanations of the ( $\psi$ ) form transposes to ( $\neg\psi$ ) explanations. In particular, an explanation of the ( $\neg\psi$ ) form can appeal only to factors which link-up in the appropriate way to the actions or attitudes they're called upon to explain. I can invoke the fact that it's raining to explain in the rationalising manner why I took the umbrella, but cannot invoke the fact that umbrellas annoy me to do so. Similarly, I can invoke the fact that unripe fruit looks green to explain why I think that all green tomatoes are unripe, but not the fact that all over-ripe fruit looks green to do so. Part of the explanation of why this

is so is that rationalising explanations of the  $(\neg\psi)$  form must always take as *explanantia* factors which tell us how it is from the subject's own point of view so that the reason to perform the action or maintain the attitude corresponding to the *explanandum* of the explanation is present as a reason to perform the action or maintain the attitude from that point of view.

But now we can ask the question: do items which are not finely individuated propositions count as factors which give how it is from the subject's own point of view so that their reason to believe that O is F is present as a reason to believe so? Again, I don't think so. For if the *explanans* of the  $(\neg\psi)$  explanation is just a particular or a state of affairs, then it won't be an element of the subject's point of view which is the appearance of a reason to believe *that O is F* to them, rather than any distinct member of the innumerable large set of propositions which are equally accurate ways of thinking about the particular or state of affairs in question.

This does not, it should be noted, quite get us (P2), which is the claim that all rationalising explanations – whether of the  $(\psi)$  or  $(\neg\psi)$  form – take truths as *explanantia*. But it does get us the weaker claim that the *explanantia* of  $(\neg\psi)$  explanations are truths, which, given (P1), is enough to refute (TMV).

## 4 Two Objections

I want to finish by examining two objections to the argument of this paper: (i) the claim that the subject's reason is *identical* to the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation is too strong and (ii) my cashing out of (TMV) fails to pay attention to the role perceptual-recognitional capacities can play for the proponent of the view. As we will see, the two objections are dialectically related. I take each in turn.

### 4.1 Reasons $\neq$ *Explanantia*

It might be objected to the argument of this paper that the claim that the reasons for which one acts and holds attitudes are *identical* to the *explanantia* of rationalising explanations is too strong. For, it might be said, whatever can be said in favour of the identity claim can be readily captured by appeal to the weaker claim that the *explanantia* of rationalising explanations are truths which *represent*, but are not identical to, the reasons for which the subject acts or holds the relevant attitude. This would involve rejecting (P1) in favour of the weaker claim that when the subject believes that p for a reason, the reason, as opposed to the psychological state which constitutes the agent's perspective on their reason, does explain why they believe in the rationalising manner, it's just that it doesn't

do so by being *identical* to the *explanans*, but by being represented by a truth that is so identical.

This representational claim is not of much help to the proponent of (TMV), however, for accepting it creates a separate problem for them. The issue is that even if the representational claim is accepted, still, the anti-psychologistic conception of rationalising explanation will continue to be accepted, but with a modification: that the reason, as opposed to the state of mind directed towards it, explains by dint of being represented by the *explanans* of the explanation, not by being identical to it. However, on the anti-psychologistic conception, the mental states which constitute one's perspective on one's reason function to enable one's reason to explain why one believes. Thus, the proponent of (TMV) who makes the move I am considering will have to say that experience enables a truth about the perceived truth-maker to be the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which one's belief is subject, and thereby enables one's reason to explain the belief. But now the following question arises: how can experience enable a truth to function as the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which one's belief is subject without the truth being part of the content of the experience? I don't think there is a satisfactory answer to this question: the proponent of (TMV) will indeed have to say that experience has content, and it is by dint of having content that it enables the relevant truths to function as *explanantia* and hence the reasons to which they correspond as playing their explanatory role. That would require the ascription of content to experience, and would involve putting such content to work in the epistemological story told about perception. But if the proponent of (TMV) has to do that, then they lose the way of motivating their theory over the Content Model described above.<sup>24</sup>

## 4.2 A Role for Recognitional Capacities

The second objection I consider concerns the way in which I've formulated (TMV). I have spoken as if the proponent of (TMV) is committed to saying, of vision for example, that seeing an object, event, state of affairs, or property instance *suffices* for one to possess that entity as a reason for belief. But the proponent of (TMV) will surely not want

---

<sup>24</sup>Another way of denying (P1) is to say that the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which one's belief is subject when one believes for a reason is not identical to one's reason itself, but to some relational mental state one is in which constitutes one's awareness of one's reason. This would be different from saying that the rationalising explanation is of the ( $\psi$ ) form, because instances of the latter involve only narrowly supervening psychological states. For the proponent of (TMV), the idea would be that it is one's state of seeing the relevant truth-maker which is the *explanans* of the explanation: that state doesn't merely play the role of enabling one's reason to be the *explanans*. The problem with this is that the argument of §3.3 implies that only contentful psychological states can play the rationalising role, whether relational or not. Thus, the proponent of (TMV) who makes this move would again be committed to ascribing an epistemological role to experiential representational content.



to say that, for entities which are present in one's visual field are entities which are seen by one but, if they have not been noticed, one will not count as being in possession of any perceptual reason corresponding to them. In response to this point, the proponent of (TMV) will have to say that it is not just perceiving the truth-making entity which is required, but that one must be in some way attending to the entity in question, for example: looking at, or watching it.

There is a further supposed datum which the proponent of (TMV) might wish to respect. Suppose I am looking at the red cube, but I do not possess the capacity to recognise cubes by sight. Thus, I am not in a position to know that there is a red cube before me. But it might be thought that I do not count as possessing any reason to believe that there is a red cube before me either, for if I am not so much as in a position to recognise a cube when I see one, how could it be that upon looking at one, I ought to believe that there is one there? However, that such an ought applies to me seems to be a necessary condition for my possession of a reason to believe that there's a red cube there. So, supposing this to be correct, the proponent of (TMV) will have to modify their position further still: they will have to say that one possesses a truth-making entity as a reason to believe only if one stands in the perceiving relation to that entity, one is attending to that entity, and one possesses a capacity to recognise entities of the relevant kind by perception.

However, if they say that, then they are in a position to make the move described in §4.1, whilst avoiding the objection that this requires them to ascribe content to experience. For now that recognitional capacities are on the scene, the proponent of (TMV) can say the following. One's reason in cases of perceptual belief are the truth-making particulars or states of affairs perceived, and such items get to explain in the rationalising manner why one believes that p by dint of being represented by a truth that is the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which one's belief is subject. But what drove the thought that content needs to be ascribed is the idea that the only way to answer the question: how does experience get to enable that truth to play the role of *explanans*? is by appeal to the claim that it has the truth as content. With recognitional capacities on the scene, however, we can answer that question by saying: it is the operation of a relevant recognitional capacity that enables the relevant truth to function as *explanans*. The experience itself doesn't constitute one's possession of a reason, rather the experience plus the operation of a recognitional capacity does so, and it is the latter which does the work of enabling the relevant truth to function as *explanans*.

The problem with this is that we can't really make sense of what it is to put a recognitional capacity into operation other than as the acquisition of knowledge of the type of

proposition of which it is a capacity to know.<sup>25</sup> Putting into operation a capacity to know red cubes by sight just is to come to know by vision that there is a red cube there. However, if that's so, then the present attempt to remedy the above defence of (TMV) runs into a problem. The idea is that it is the operation of the capacity to recognise red cubes by sight which enables the truth that the cube is red to function as the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which my belief that the cube is red is subject, so that a particular corresponding to it can count as explaining why I believe as I do. But if putting a recognitional capacity into operation just is coming to know a relevant proposition about what's perceived, then the suggestion boils down to the suggestion that it is a state of knowing that the cube is red, acquired off the back of the operation of a recognitional capacity, which enables the truth that the cube is red to function as *explanans*.

We are now in a position to see the problem. The proponent of (TMV) is committed to Reasons Priority. As such, they want to explain why perception yields knowledge by appeal to the thought that perception provides reasons for belief. But we have just seen that, properly developed, the recognitional capacity move requires that it is my knowledge that the cube is red which enables me to believe that the cube is red on the basis of my reason. It enables me to do so by enabling the known truth to be the *explanans* of the rationalising explanation to which my belief that the cube is red is subject, which is what partly constitutes my belief being held for a reason, thought of as a truth-making entity perceived, to which the *explanans* corresponds. As is apparent, this would be inconsistent with Reasons Priority, a thesis which (TMV) is precisely designed to safeguard.

---

<sup>25</sup>See Millar (2007, 2008, 2010) for a conception of recognitional capacities along those lines. Interestingly, the notion also figures in the discussion of Kalderon (2011). See also Travis (2004, 2007).

## References

- Amrstrong, D.M. 1997. *A World of States of Affairs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BonJour, Laurence. 1985. *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard Universtiy Press.
- Brewer, Bill. 1999. *Perception and Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2011. *Perception and its Objects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crane, Tim. 2009. “Is Perception a Propositional Attitude?” *Philosophical Quarterly*, 59 (236): 452–469.
- Daly, Chris. 1997. “Tropes”. In: *Properties*. Ed. by D.H. Mellor and Alex Oliver. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 149–159.
- Dancy, Jonathan. 2000. *Practical Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2004. “Two Ways of Explaining Actions”. In: *Agency and Action*. Ed. by John Hyman & Helen Steward. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 25–42.
- Davidson, Donald. 1963. “Actions, Reasons, and Causes”. *Journal of Philosophy*, 60 (23): 3–19.
- 1986. “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge”. In: *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*. Ed. by Ernest LePore. London: Blackwell: 307–319.
- Dodd, Julian. 1999. “Farewell to States of Affairs”. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 77 (2): 146–160.
- Glüer, Kathrin. 2009. “In Defence of a Doxastic Account of Experience”. *Mind & Language*, 24 (3): 297–327.
- Johnston, Mark. 2006. “Better than Mere Knowledge? The Function of Sensory Awareness”. In: *Perceptual Experience*. Ed. by J. Hawthorne and T. Gendler. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 460–490.
- 2011. “On a Neglected Epistemic Virtue”. *Philosophical Issues*, 21 (1): 165–218.
- Kalderon, Mark Eli. 2011. “Before the Law”. *Philosophical Issues*, 21 (1): 219–243.
- Longworth, Guy. “Surveying the Facts”. Unpublished Manuscript.
- McDowell, John. 1996. *Mind and World*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard Universtiy Press.
- 1999. “Experiencing the World”. In: *John McDowell, Reason and Nature*. Ed. by Marcus Willaschek. Münster: LIT-Verlag: 3–18.
- 2006. “Response to Dancy”. In: *McDowell and his Critics*. Ed. by Cynthia Macdonald and Graham Macdonald. London: Blackwell: 134–141.
- Millar, Alan. 2007. “What the Disjunctivist is Right About”. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 74 (1): 176–199.

- Millar, Alan. 2008. "Perceptual Recognitional Abilities and Perceptual Knowledge". In: *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*. Ed. by Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 330–347.
- 2010. "Knowledge and Recognition". In: *The Nature and Value of Knowledge*. Ed. by Duncan Pritchard, Alan Millar, and Adrian Haddock. Oxford: Oxford University Press: Part II.
- Mulligan, Kevin, Simons, Peter, and Smith, Barry. 1984. "Truth-Makers". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 44 (3): 287–321.
- Peacocke, Christopher. 1983. *Sense & Content*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pryor, James. 2005. "There is Immediate Justification". In: *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*. Ed. by Matteus Steup and Ernest Sosa. London: Blackwell: 181–201.
- Rodriguez-Pereyra, Gonzalo. 2005. "Why Truthmakers?" In: *Truthmakers: the Contemporary Debate*. Ed. by Helen Beebe and Julian Dodd. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 17–32.
- Roessler, Johannes. 2009. "Perceptual Experience and Perceptual Knowledge". *Mind*, 118 (472): 1013–1041.
- Ruben, David-Hillel. 2012. *Explaining Explanation*. Second Edition. London: Paradigm Publishers.
- Scanlon, T.M. 1998. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Schroeder, Mark. 2008. "Having Reasons". *Philosophical Studies*, 139 (1): 57–71.
- 2011. "What does it take to "have" a reason?" In: *Reasons for Belief*. Ed. by Andrew Reisner and Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 201–222.
- Textor, Mark. 2012. *States of Affairs*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. URL: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/states-of-affairs>. Accessed 1.08.2015.
- Travis, Charles. 2004. "The Silence of the Senses". *Mind*, 113 (449): 59–94.
- 2007. "Reason's Reach". *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2 (15): 225–248.
- Williamson, Timothy. 2000. *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.