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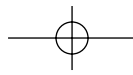# Starting Afresh Disjunctively: Perceptual Engagement with the World

Sonia Sedivy

The primary aim of this essay is to elaborate a conceptualist direct realism that strengthens the appeal of taking a disjunctive approach to perception. Conceptualist direct realism holds that perception is a *sui generis* capacity characterized by *sui generis* content: world-involving or fully engaged, genuinely singular, conceptual, determinate. More simply, perceptual experiences are contentful episodes that are distinguished by content that is both conceptual (individuated by conceptual modes of presentation) and determinate, involving its objects and properties. One might say that such contents are both Fregean and Russellian—world-involving yet individuated not only by the worldly facts (or correctness conditions) but also by a perceiver's grasp of the requisite facts. This is an approach to content that follows through on Gareth Evans's (1982) and John McDowell's (1986) groundbreaking work in bringing the best of Frege and the best of Russell together in our explanation of perceptual contents.

It is not new to put some version of direct realism together with a disjunctive approach. Indeed the two typically come together. Both aim to show that perception is a world-involving capacity. Direct realism provides the substantive theoretical framework while the disjunctive insight supplies a key integral component: the insight that the category of how things seem to a subject is an essentially disjunctive category that subsumes both engaged and disengaged states. The disjunctive claim concerns an uncontroversial category of common sense about which we need not make heavy weather—in so far as we can recognize that the category is disjunctive and subsumes two or more categories of mental capacities and their respective kinds of contents. That is, in so far as we recognize that when it comes to how things seem

to a subject, she might be perceptually engaged with the world *or* in an illusory state without being able to tell the difference. The intended upshot is that the possibility that a perceiver might be unable to distinguish a perceptual experience from an illusory state does not undermine the fact that in favourable circumstances she is perceptually engaged with her surroundings. The latter is a fact that we—theorists and ordinary perceivers alike—can understand about perception even if, on occasion, any one of us might be unable to distinguish a perceptual experience from a state that mimics engagement.

The disjunctive insight is important because it allows theory of perception to work out a detailed account of perceptual experience as a *sui generis* capacity, and of perceptual content as a *sui generis* kind of content. Theory of perception can proceed with these tasks in so far as it can sidestep the regression to a highest common factor between perceptual experiences and sensory episodes from which perceptions might seem indistinguishable from the first-person perspective. Highest common factor approaches to perception have classically held that because a person might fail to distinguish an illusory episode from a perceptual experience, perceptions yield no greater epistemic warrant than illusions, and this is explained by casting the two capacities as having a common kind of content or common sensory aspect. Contemporary variants diverge along several dimensions, but it is beyond the scope of this essay to address all variants explicitly. Rather, the task here is to present one coherent package—a conceptual direct realist theory of perception that incorporates the disjunctive insight to mutual advantage.

The task is posed by the fact that direct realism and the disjunctive proposal face serious hurdles. Direct realism needs to show that the nature of perceptual experience or "the fabric of [perceptual] consciousness" itself indicates that such experience is relational.[1] Put more in my terms, direct realism needs to show that perception is a *sui generis* relational capacity and that perceptual content is genuinely singular—so that perceptual content could not be just as it is if the world were not involved and if the world were not as it is represented as being. The second and related hurdle is metaphysical. In so far as the metaphysical commitments associated with our scientific picture of the world suggest that the world is not as we perceive it—lacking the technicolour splendour of our perceptions, for example—direct realist theories of perception seem blocked at the start. Direct realist accounts need to scale the metaphysical hurdle and show that their non-objectifying explanations of our selves and the world are compatible with the developing scientific picture. To do so, direct realism needs to explain how it is that the mind-independent individuals we perceive have the properties that we perceive.

This essay will show how *conceptualist* direct realism can answer these principal objections. I will provide a novel argument showing that the "fabric of [perceptual]

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[1] See, for example, Michael Martin's (2004) claim that a "naïve realist" needs to offer reasons to show why we must think of the fabric of consciousness as relational, and therefore not common to perception and hallucination. My argument from perceptual determinacy from the first-person perspective gives those reasons, though the conceptualist direct realism differs in significant respects from the position that Michael Martin labels "naïve realism".
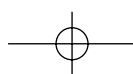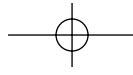
consciousness" is relational and I will provide an extended two-part response to the metaphysical objection. These arguments aim to show that the disjunctive insight attains its fullest theoretical potential, offering the best explanation of perception, if it is located within a conceptualist form of direct realism.

But I would like to be able to argue in a non-standard way. I would like to take an explanatory approach to perception that is not answerable to sceptical pressure as a precondition at the very outset. Sceptical worries place theory of mind under constraint from epistemology, prioritizing epistemic concerns. In contrast, an explanatory approach may proceed in theory of mind and theory of knowledge simultaneously, developing accounts of the varieties of mental content that work with both third- and first-person facts and show how various kinds of mental contents can play the justificatory or rationalizing roles required of them. One important consequence is that explaining illusory and hallucinatory states does not come up at the outset but rather in the course of developing an explanation of perception to deal with peripheral and limiting cases. Another important feature is that an explanatory approach can be inclusive and non-objectifying. It may include different kinds of explanations without prioritizing facts available to either the third- or the first-person perspectives. And it can strive to show how the non-objectifying considerations that conceptual realists work with are not in tension with scientific explanations.

I will interweave such an explanatory approach within the principal line of argument (which develops a disjunctive conceptual realist account). Though this may seem paradoxical, I believe that taking an explanatory approach addresses rather than evades the third and perhaps most unyielding source of discomfort with direct realist, disjunctive approaches. A disjunctive approach to perception does not show that an individual perceiver can distinguish veridical perceptions from illusory states. It does not follow through on the sceptical trump that gives primacy to the sceptical problem—and that implies that going ahead with theory of mind and metaphysics without a solution to the sceptical challenge is less than adequately warranted. The worry that needs to be addressed is whether a disjunctive approach can legitimately allow us to sidestep the well-worn concessive paths into which we are steered by arguments 'from illusion' given the fact that a disjunctive account does not answer the sceptical challenge as posed.

Suppose we interrupt the usual dialectic briefly to pose a simple-minded question that asks us to suppose something that runs evidently contrary to the historical facts. Reverse the order between the sceptical challenge to perceptual experience and the disjunctive insight. Suppose we had not thought of sceptical challenges to perceptual experience prior to recognizing that the fallibility of perceptual experience suggests a disjunctive account of perceptual experience? What if the disjunctive insight had come first?

Now consider our historical trajectory. Once we have the disjunctive insight at our disposal as a theoretical resource, it does change our sense of the issues. Not in the sense that we think we can answer sceptical challenges directly, but in the sense that we have something like a counterfactual insight about the nature of the problem posed by the fallibility of perception. I am suggesting very simply that: if we already had the disjunctive insight, the sceptical challenge would not have had its
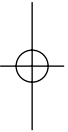
pre-emptive force, its ability to prioritize epistemology over theory of mind and meta-physics. This is because the disjunctive insight allows us to take the fallibility of per-ception in our stride in the course of developing the best explanation of the nature of perception, rather than at the outset as a precondition for theorizing about per-ception (or the world) at all. Insights can feedback and supplement one another and the feedback may even be of the strongest, constitutive kind where insights are 'co-constituted' through their feedback effects on one another. The relationship among direct realism, the disjunctive insight, and conceptualism seems to me to be of this mutually co-constitutive kind. That is why I believe that setting out from an explana-tory approach—that does not prioritize dealing with issues of perceptual fallibility at the first-person perspective—does not simply disregard the fundamental discomfort but engages with it.

Moreover, undertaking an explanatory approach relies on—without being able to rehearse—much fairly recent argumentation which suggests that: (i) we should not prioritize the first-person perspective at the expense of third-person facts (and vice versa); and (ii) presuppositions concerning the mind have often been at work in epis-temic theories even when the epistemic issues seem to force substantive conclusions about the mind and its contents. In other words, taking an explanatory approach in the face of sceptical pressure is not simply historicist insouciance because philo-sophical arguments, much like artworks, depend on their historical context. Just as Marcel Duchamp could not have offered a 'ready-made' to the Sun King or at a Paris Salon of the nineteenth century, so it is possible to start theory of perception from an explanatory perspective only once twentieth-century philosophical argumentation is in place. Now the task is to examine how illuminating might be the results. And the emphasis needs to be placed on the need to avoid objectifying. That is the heart of conceptualism.[2]

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[2] See for example, McDowell's view that the problems in theory of mind and knowledge that need to be redressed with a disjunctive approach to perception are posed by "an objectifying conception of the human". This suggestion comes at the end of his initial disjunctivist proposal in 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge' (1982) and is elaborated in detail in his later 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space' (1986): "I want to end by mentioning a source for the attraction of the 'highest common factor' conception that lies, I think, as deep as any. If we adopt the disjunctive conception of appearances, we have to take seriously the idea of an unmediated openness of the experiencing subject to 'external reality . . . No doubt there are many influences that conspire to give the opposing picture of the 'inner' and 'outer' its hold on us. The one I want to mention is that we are prone to try to extend an objectifying mode of conceiving reality to human beings. In an objectifying view of reality, behaviour considered in itself cannot be expressive or significant; human behaviour no more than, say, the behaviour of the planets. If human behaviour is expressive, the fact resides not in the nature of the behaviour, as it were on the surface, but in its being the outwardly observable effect of mental states and goings-on. So the mind retreats behind the surface, and the idea that the mental is 'internal' acquires a quasi-literal construal, as in Descartes, or even a literal one, as in the idea that mental states are 'in the head' . . . And it is hard to see how the pictured interface can fail to be epistemically problematic in the outward direction too; the inward retreat of the mind undermines the idea of a direct openness to the world, and thereby poses the traditional problems of knowledge about 'external' reality in general. . . . Traditional epistemology is widely felt to be unsatisfying; I think this is a symptom of the error in the 'highest common factor' conception, and more generally, of the misguidedness of an objectifying conception of the human" (1982/1998: 392–4; last italics mine).
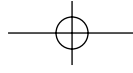
1 FANCIFUL OR SENSIBLE?

Let's start by imagining that interstellar travellers might visit earth one day. Considering the way in which they would understand us shows the most straightforward or best explanation of ourselves.
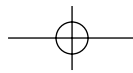
Observing the various life forms, with their various strategies for survival—such as staying rooted in one place or moving about—the intergalactic visitors would find mobile life forms intelligible as follows. The mobile ones survive by acting on their environment and they are able to act on it by means of various sensory and perceptual modalities. The more complex ones—the ones whose interaction with their environment is quite complex (the birds and higher animals, let's say)—are able to behave in complicated ways because they are perceptually and behaviourally engaged with the individuals and with the determinate properties of those individuals that are relevant in their survival strategies. It is clear to our visitors that a complex animal can only behave successfully in its environment if it is engaged with the individuals and determinate properties that its complex behaviour concerns.

Suppose that our intergalactic visitors were fortunate enough to touch down on an African savannah with its wondrous variety of animals, interlocked in the complex daily dance of the food chain. Those who will be eaten, as well as those who will do the eating, walk among the tall grasses. Everyone is careful, moving slowly, fully on the lookout. Stripes and spots are everywhere. The tall grass stripes the already striped bodies of the animals that are on the menu, while the light falling through the leaves and tall grass introduces yet more stripes and spots into the scene. Everything blurs and shimmers slightly with the rising heat. All parties need to note *any* unusual movement of potentially *any* of the myriad stripes or spots, however slight, *as* it occurs—so as to burst into chase or flight. How is this achieved? Could anything short of engagement with their habitat allow the majority of the herd animals to avoid their predators? Could the predators succeed in catching a prey if they were less than engaged? Yet what exactly is it for an animal to be experientially engaged with its habitat?

Not only would intergalactic visitors explain animals as engaged with their habitat, they would also explain engagement as a distinctive world-involving content. To understand why this would be the best explanation it is important to be clear about the alternatives. The straightforward alternative to engagement is that an animal's perceptions have a content that does not involve the represented individuals and *properties* so that their perceptual content could be just as it is while the world is quite otherwise, and that behaviour is initiated by such content—we might call representational content of this kind 'self-standing'.[3] There is also another alternative,

[3] Intentionalism is a key contemporary theory that holds that perceptual content does not involve properties so that the detailed "phenomenal character" of perceptual experience is abstract rather than determinate, and non-conceptual. Michael Tye's intentionalist theory (1995: 138–40) for example, holds that the "phenomenal character" of perceptual experience is abstract rather than determinate, which means that "no particular concrete objects enter into these contents . . . What is crucial to phenomenal character is the representation of general features or properties". What it

which holds that animals are engaged with their habitat, but proposes to explain engagement in terms of a content that can be common to illusions or hallucinations such as an existentially quantified content. Neither of these two alternatives can explain continuous update in real time. And this is a primary condition on a theory of perception if one begins, as intergalactic observers would, by striving to explain the role of perception in the life of complex animals. World-involving representational contents update 'for free' along with changes in the world. That is why such contents stand out as the best explanation of perceptual engagement from the outset (so long as one starts from a perspective that focuses on the real-time conditions of animal life). The problem for representational contents that are not world-involving—contents that can be common to hallucinations and illusions—is that they need to be organized in a manner that allows for efficient access for update in real time. (In our history, this problem became vivid in cognitive science research as the frame problem.) World-involving contents trump any attempt to show how straightforwardly self-standing or common-kind representational contents might be organized to yield efficient real-time update—because they update along with the world, thanks to the world. That it why the intergalactic visitors would not resort to positing representational contents that make it very difficult (if not impossible) to explain complex animal activity, when determinate contents that involve the world are exactly what the job description requires. As a cheetah bursts into its 110 kilometres per hour chase and gazelles scatter, our visitors see that only one explanation is adequate.
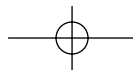
Of course, the dance of the savannah is not all the intergalactic travellers would visit. It would become clear to them that one species of complex animal is a culture-originating and culture-perpetuating animal whose life activities have been developed into a superabundance of cultural forms. The complexity in this species' activity involves linguistic communication and requires the attribution of complex organismic (whole organism) states to one another, states that can be rendered intelligible in terms of rationalizing propositional contents. Such second-nature animals[4] act on their environment no less, and of course in order to be able to act and interact they also must be engaged with the individuals and determinate properties with which they interact.

So far, the point of imagining the intergalactic visit is to emphasize that to understand perception is in the first instance to understand the role it plays in the life of organisms. Theory of perception is, in the first instance, integral to the straightforward or best explanation of complex animal life. The best explanation is that complex activity requires a high level of determinate detail, and that such detail

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is exactly for objects to enter into content is a nuanced matter. But it is clear that intentionalism denies, whereas I argue, that perceptual contents are determinate, and that the explanation of this fact is that mind-independent objects enter into or are involved in perceptual contents. This is not to suggest that perceptual content has non-representational components or aspects, as Michael Martin (2004) for example, has suggested on behalf of the theory he labels "naïve realism".

[4] The idea of first and second nature will be explained in the final section, which answers the metaphysical objection. As a first pass, let's say that first nature is the set of inborn potentialities, while second nature is the result of cultural, norm-governed learning—which of course relies on first nature no less than on the cultural norms into which one is trained: that is the point of calling it second.
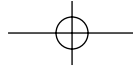
is available through engagement with it rather than by means of reproducing it. From an explanatory perspective, it is clear that perception and action make up an indissoluble functional unit. What we have historically isolated as 'perception' and 'action' mutually entail one another as interdependent and co-constituted aspects of an animal's engagement with the world. Engagement is with individuals. Individuals are determinate (or definite). Their properties are determinate. It is on individuals and their determinate properties that an animal acts and it can only so act in so far as those individuals are perceived to the level of determinacy required for its action—a level of determinacy whose perception is simultaneously made possible by active, self-directed engagement. Co-constitution means that perceptual content would not be possible—and would not be what it is—without complex feedback that is only possible through self-initiated activity (and vice versa of course).[5] Perceptual engagement might admit limiting cases and peripheral cases, but to explain it one must start from the capacity itself—from its role in the life of the organism—and proceed to understanding the peripheral and limiting cases from there. This is the key point.

Suppose that after a sufficiently prolonged acquaintance we can communicate with our visitors. They tell us how they have come to understand us—they tell us that they understand that we are perceptually and behaviourally engaged with our world. They assure us that it is quite clear that the mental contents that must be attributed to us to render our complex activity intelligible stand in complex justificatory or rationalizing relations. Now suppose we tell them that for hundreds of years we have been troubled by the possibility of imagining that an individual person might have disengaged or non-engaged states that are experientially indistinguishable from her perceptual engagements with the world. It is always possible, we emphasize, that an individual person might not be able to tell for certain when she is in fact in one of those disengaged states. We tell our visitors that it has been a professional occupation for hundreds of years to develop an understanding of perceptual engagement that begins from this putative possibility and that requires explanation of this putative possibility in the first instance en route to understanding perception. Our visitors might be bemused or interested. They might find our approach intriguing, or charming, or quaint. The one thing they don't do, however, is change their approach. When they get back in their spaceship, the approach characteristic of our epistemic tradition is not the one that would allow them to travel the universe, finding intelligibility where it is to be found.

But they never share their intellectual history with us. They do not tell us whether they also have thought of sceptical challenges to the very possibility of perceptual engagement, and if they have done so, how they deal with them. Does this change anything? All we know is that they accommodate the facts from their explanatory point of view—after all, it is evident from that point of view when an animal is perceptually engaged or when it is in a disengaged state with content that mimics

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[5] For more detailed explanation, see, for example, Hurley (1998: esp. chs. 8 and 9).
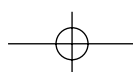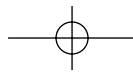
engagement. Does this fact—that we do not know how they deal with sceptical problems—change the adequacy of their explanation, given that their explanation is rationalizing and can account for perceptual fallibility?

Like intergalactic travellers who would find us intelligible, what if I propose that perception is perceptual engagement? For an animal whose survival requires complex interaction with its environment, the function of perception is to engage with the determinate particular detail of life: the determinate particular individuals, properties, layouts, events among which it acts. My focus is on us, animals with a second nature that transfigures our first animal nature (and I will return to this way of explaining ourselves in the metaphysically oriented discussion in the fourth section). For us, activity of any kind requires perceptual engagement with the relevant individuals and determinate properties—whether the activity be reading, operating heavy machinery, looking at a painting, playing a computer game, or skiing down an icy mountain. Hiking along a forest path, for example, I need to feel the determinate shapes of the rocks beneath my feet to keep my balance; understanding (of the self-standing, determinable kind) *that there are many differently shaped rocks on the path* would not enable me to walk, it is not what activity requires. Rather, I need to feel "*this* determinate shape" and "*that* curve" and "*that* squishy tilt". This is what would be clear to the intergalactic travellers. Emphasizing the interrelationship between perception and action from the outset highlights that perceptual experience is distinguished by its determinacy. It shows that theory of perceptual content—in our case no less than in the case of animals—needs to account for the determinacy of perceptual content as one of its primary data.

More precisely, theory of perception needs to explain that perceptions present rather than abstract away from the determinate nature of individuals and properties, and that what is presented must be not only the individuals and properties on which we act, but of course, the individual members of kinds—'that rock'—and the instances of properties—'that shape'—on which we act with understanding. If these facts are the starting point for our theorizing, there is no reason to suppose that the *determinacy* of our perceptions entails that those experiences—those engagements—cannot be conceptual like our thoughts. There is nothing about engagement with determinate properties that indicates that such a capability is not or cannot be conceptual. Rather, complex demonstrative concepts—the concepts involved in genuine singular thoughts—provide a model for understanding perceptual content. The model is apt because demonstrative thought or talk involves individuals and properties by means of capacities that pass stringent constraints, so that we call the resulting contents 'conceptual'. The capacities at issue amount to an *understanding* of the spatial location of the perceived individual or property and this means—though the connection might not be obvious—that there is some *grasp* that individuals are potential bearers of various properties and properties potentially characterize different individuals. That is, the capacities are re-combinatory along both referential and attributive dimensions, a

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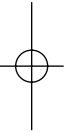
fact that turns out to be a complex achievement when we recognize all that it entails. But nothing less is involved in thought or experience that is genuinely spatial.[6]

The approach just sketched is a conceptualist form of direct realism. The hallmarks of positions of this type are, most simply, that they claim that (i) perceptual experience is object and property-involving; and that (ii) it is fully conceptual as well. Here is David Wiggins's (1986: 170) more detailed characterization of conceptualist realism:
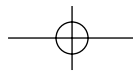
Conceptualism may be thought of as comprising three claims: first, that the singling out of an object in experience depends upon the possibility of singling it out as a *this such*; second, that there is no surrogate or reductive level (for instance, the level of description of retinal stimulation or whatever), that is, no level distinct from that at which we have objects of this sort and thoughts of them conceived in genuine reciprocity with one another, such that at that reductive level, you could determine what object it was that the subject was impinged upon by; and third, that our cognitive access to reality is always through conceptions that are conceptions of what it is to be this or that sort of thing, these conceptions being a posteriori and at every point corrigible by experience, yet present in advance of the recognition of any particular object as a this such.

In part, my point so far is that such realism need not be identified as resulting only from a long philosophical voyage, the sort of voyage that yields contemporary debates about realism. It is also the sensible rather obvious account of ourselves that greets us when we stop to think quite simply about how we are intelligible—which is just to say how we are.

Yet the notion of determinacy and of determinate properties is problematic. To avert misunderstanding, it is important to note at the start that the concept highlights what might seem to be two different points about perception, yet is really one. First, individuals and their properties are determinate. It might be helpful to note that definite and determinate are related concepts. What are 'out there' in the world are determinate or definite individuals and their properties. In so far as complex activity requires engagement with individuals and properties, it is with determinate individuals and determinate properties that complex animals engage. But this is not the only relevant factor when we consider perception. Perceptual experience is not simply individual- and property-involving; it is a mode of engagement. It is not simply the determinate individuals and their properties 'out there, in the world' that our perceptions depend on causally, but those individuals and properties under the relevant perceptual modes of presentation (to put the point using one set of well-known philosophical resources). This is to stress that perceptual engagement is a representational capacity. What we enjoy perceptually is content, albeit a distinctive individual- and property-involving content that presents individuals and properties perceptually. Perceptual content is distinguished by its qualitative richness. This is the second fact that the notion of determinacy captures. Perception's qualitative richness is predominantly cast as a richness of information. But to say that perceptual engagement is determinate—in that it presents and involves determinate individuals and

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[6] For the detailed account, see my (2006).
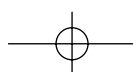
properties—is to say that the qualitative richness of our experience is in the world rather than something we have 'received' along an informational channel. When it comes to perception, the two senses of determinacy belong together. The notion of determinacy relates the 'richness' of perceptual content and the world-involving nature of such content.[7]

Consider that when we touch something, running our fingers over it, we gain information about the object's fully determinate nature—its determinate shape, contours, and texture—by engaging with it. What we think of as our distance senses—perceptual capacities that give us information about objects that are at some distance from us such as vision or hearing or smell—are no different. When we think about running our fingers along a surface, we can readily imagine that enabling sub-personal (central nervous system) processes might be best explained as forming representations of the felt surface. But we are not inclined to think that what we experience is, in the first instance, a representation of the surface, rather than the surface itself—or that the representational content we experience does not involve its object, so that the content could be just as it is even if the surface were quite different or if there were no surface at all. I am suggesting that the so-called distance senses are similar. Distance senses engage us with the world, an engagement that is presumably enabled by complex sub-personal representational processes. But what we are engaged with are the objects and properties out there in the world rather than representations of them. When I touch a table and when I look at a table, or when I hear a coin drop onto a table—these capacities form a kind, they are perceptual engagements with the world. Such capacities are made possible in part by sub-personal processes that may involve and produce representations of the external environment. But it is very important to be clear that what the sub-personal processes make possible is that the animal—the whole animal, the cheetah or the person, let's say—is engaged with its environment.

This point is in no tension with the evident fact that *what* an animal engages with—which individuals and determinate properties—varies from species to species and also across individuals. As David Wiggins (1986: 171) put a somewhat related point, this is no more problematic or "exciting" than noting that "the size and mesh of a net determine not what fish are in the sea but which ones we shall catch". If a hippo, alligator, house cat, and human walk down the same path, the determinate properties with which their feet engage will vary along with the thickness of their skin as well as the number of receptors within the skin, etc. (Their engagement will also vary with the nature of their understanding of their surroundings, but I am setting aside the issue of conceptual articulation for now—David Wiggins's issue about the determinacy of conceptual thought and experience. I will return to it in the last section of the essay but it is not the focus of the point I am making here.) If my feet become thickly calloused, then the determinate properties *out there* with which I engage be different from those I engaged before the calluses grew. The hippo's feet, needless to say, will engage at least some different determinate properties
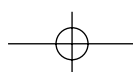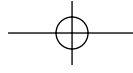
of the surface. Imagine running your fingers along a cloth of raw silk with its slightly stubbly texture. Now imagine running your fingers along that same cloth of raw silk with the thickly calloused fingers that come from decades of hard labour out of doors. The cloth is the same. It is the same 'reservoir' or 'repository' of textures. Which determinate properties I engage with and how I do so depends in part on the relevant mode of perceptual presentation—my skin and its condition in this case—as well as on the properties of the cloth. But regardless of the condition of my skin, it is some determinate property with which this perceptual capacity engages. The same point can be made for our distance senses. Before I put on my glasses, the lettering on a small medicine bottle is thin, grey, and indistinct. As I put on my glasses, the lettering thickens, turning a nice rich black as each shape becomes crisply contoured. But the grey blurs are no less determinate than are the rich black letters that my glasses help bring into view, and that my eyes engaged with on their own a few years ago.
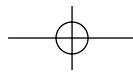
2 THE FIRST HURDLE FOR DIRECT REALISM: IS THE CHARACTER OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE RELATIONAL?

An argument for engagement from the determinate character of perceptual experience

This argument also begins from the determinacy of perceptual experience to show that perception is a mode of engagement and that perceptual content is world-involving—or in other words, that the "fabric of [perceptual] consciousness is relational" and so "not common to perception and hallucination" (Martin 2004: 19). But the argument switches perspective. It starts from what perceptual experience is like at the first-person perspective, rather than from the intersubjectively evident facts that one could examine, like intergalactic visitors.[8]

Here is the first-person datum. Recently, I spent the month of October in the Canadian 'north', finding myself walking along the same path, seeing the same stretch of forest every afternoon. The deciduous forest all around would take my breath away with its beauty, as the colours changed day by day from green to a jumble of green, gold, bright red, and orange; to all-gold across a stretch of many days; and then finally to a sparse sprinkling of copper when the gold leaves fell. I would stop and try to take in the beauty, to impress it within myself so that I could always remember it. But

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[8] The argument can stand independently of the theoretical orientation just examined, but it fits with and supports it as well. Starting from an intersubjectively available explanatory stance that looks for intelligibility simply counsels using all the relevant considerations and facts. Nothing in such an orientation suggests that facts that are evident from a first-person perspective cannot be used or that they can be trumped by considerations from a third-person perspective; and vice versa, first-person facts cannot trump available facts from a third-person perspective. A truly explanatory perspective needs to be comprehensive—it needs to explain and to use facts from both first- and third-person perspectives without privileging either. This point cuts both ways, so that third-person facts cannot be used to trump those available only from a first-person perspective, as, for example, does Dennett's (1978b, 1991) so-called "heterophenomenology". It is only so-called phenomenology precisely because first-person facts are simply trumped by considerations that arise from a third-person perspective.

I couldn't. I would stop and look, then tell myself I should keep moving, but stop immediately just to look again. I could never retain the detailed beauty within myself even across the instant that I would look away, only to look back immediately again. This made me realize that it is impossible to remember a complex natural scene even across the span of a second or two, or even just a split second. I couldn't help but think about this fact as I would walk along. And I realized that this is true of all perception, of course: we just don't notice the fact or highlight it when we turn to forming a theoretical understanding of perception.
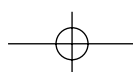
Similarly, you can examine whether this is true of your perception. You will find that from moment to moment you cannot retain a preceding perceptual experience in its determinacy (let alone recall it with equal determinacy days or months later). Pick up just a single leaf, and as you hold it in your hand, move your eyes away or close them. The determinate nature of the leaf ceases to be available. This is true however 'simple' or 'complex' the content of the perceptual experience might be—a single leaf or blade of grass, or a forest vista.
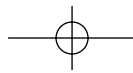
The datum that needs explaining is that perceptual experience is determinate and one is not able to *retain* a perceptual experience with equal determinacy even momentarily as one's eyes shift, let alone remember or recall the experience with the same determinacy as the original. This is a constant, ever-present fact about perception that needs to enter at the outset into our conceptualization of the nature of perception. It is not something that we suppose might be the case. It is the very character or "fabric" of perceptual experience.[9]

To explain it, one needs to consider possible varieties of mental contents. One uncontroversial category is content that can occur in the absence of the represented individuals and property instances. This category subdivides into varieties depending on whether it satisfies one or both of the following two dimensions: whether the content (i) depends on the represented individuals and properties causally and whether it (ii) involves those objects and properties in the representational content. Descriptive contents and existentially quantified are examples. But there is also the somewhat controversial category of 'genuinely singular' content that cannot occur in the absence of its objects because such content *both* depends on the represented individuals causally *and* involves those objects in the representational content.

The datum I am pointing out indicates that the contents of perceptual experience are genuinely singular. That is, the failure to retain perceptual contents indicates that

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[9] I believe that this datum holds across perceptual modalities though the detailed case cannot be presented here. One might suppose that audition poses a significant counterexample that should make us rethink the visual case as well. It is well known that composers and musically gifted people have rich auditory images of music they are composing or have played. Hence, one might object that auditory images—at least of the musically gifted—are just as determinate as auditory perceptions. By way of a swift response, consider Beethoven. Why was Beethoven made so unhappy by his loss of hearing? If his auditory images had matching determinacy to auditory perceptions, he would have missed nothing of significance by not being able to hear his pieces actually played. The only reason that his hearing loss was as devastating a tragedy as it was to him is that, in fact, an auditory image—even of someone like Beethoven—does not match the determinacy of hearing an orchestra, or chamber group, or single human voice realize a musical composition. Many thanks to Christopher Peacocke for raising this objection in conversation.

such contents depend on their objects and property instances causally, and involve their objects and property instances in the representational content. Otherwise, there would be no 'in principle' reason for failure to retain individuals and properties with the same determinacy as the initial experience. Representational content that does *not* depend on *and* involve its objects and properties can be maintained or recalled in the absence of the represented individuals and properties. Since the initial representation of the relevant individuals and properties does not involve them, such self-standing representational content can be maintained or recalled in their absence, in principle, barring problems of representational cost, storage, and access.

Moreover, the failure to retain a perceptual content in its original determinate detail cannot be explained as a failure of memory—as a failure to recall self-standing contents that is owing to contingent factors such as costliness of storage or complexity of retrieval. There is no time interval at issue. The factors that affect retrieval—such as the 'costliness' of storing complex content and organizational problems of storing complex content in a way that allows for efficient retrieval—do not come into effect instantaneously. Perceptual experience confronts us with two problems, only one of which might be explainable as a deficit of memory. What is at issue is not simply why the experiential content cannot be *recalled* with equal determinacy after a time interval, but why it cannot be *maintained* or *retained* even momentarily in the absence of the presented individuals and properties.[10]

To cast this point in the simplest terms, if I (or rather, my sub-personal, central nervous system processes) could make my own pictures or movies at the determinate detail of perceptual experience, and if perceptual experience consists in such movies, then there is no reason I couldn't hold onto and 'watch' or utilize a given 'frame' of such a movie a split second longer. If relevant sub-personal processes make determinate movies, there should not be the differences that we can note at every moment of our waking lives.[11]

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[10] One of the reviewers has objected that if the failure at issue is a failure to retain the content of a perceptual experience, this is an issue about perceptual recollection and why such recollection does not have the determinate detail of a perceptual experience. The suggestion is that "it might be argued that perceptual recollection involves the retention of a representation of a perceptual experience, rather than retention of the content of a perceptual experience". I am grateful for the objection, but I do not see how this explains away my account. If the content of a perceptual experience is determinate, then why would the retention of a representation of a perceptual experience—having determinate content—switch to less determinate content? If the determinacy of the perceptual content were not explained in terms of its object involving nature, then the point about feasibility of representational costs seems to hold. Whatever representational cost is feasible up to the point the eyes turn away should be feasible for a moment longer as one's eyes turn away.

[11] Here is a simple illustrative way to cast this point that raises an instructive objection. My claim is that if I (or rather, my sub-personal central nervous system) could make my own pictures or movies at the determinate detail of perceptual experience, and if perceptual experience consists in such movies, then there is no reason I couldn't hold onto and 'watch'—or at least utilize—a given 'frame' of such a movie a split second longer. Someone might object that when we watch movies in movie theatres, what we see are discrete frames (or pictures) with a shuttered interval of 13 milliseconds between each frame. This seems to suggest that we do retain an image for a small time interval—13 milliseconds. But who is the 'we' in question? Movie-watching demonstrates that: (i) human sub-personal processes can maintain an image for 13 milliseconds, whereas (ii) a person
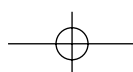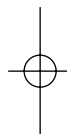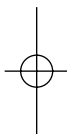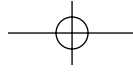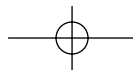
That is why the datum I am pointing out—that we cannot retain or maintain perceptual contents in their determinacy even momentarily—points to facts about perceptual experience rather than memory. There is an important lacuna in the initial descriptions of perceptual experience that theories of perception use, a hard issue that must not be conflated with questions about memory.[12]

What about action? Careful scrutiny of lived experience includes experience during activity; it is not restricted to reflection while we sit, perusing books in our hands or looking through our windows. The unity of our perception and action is very much alive at the first-person viewpoint. It is not something that can be observed only from the third-person viewpoint. From the first-person perspective, no less than from the third-person viewpoint, activity makes it clear that one key issue is change and the fact that complex action must deal with change as it occurs in real time. The activity in the first person datum I offered—that of looking at the leaves of trees while walking along a peaceful forest trail—does not raise in any obvious way the need for dealing with change as it occurs. But any number of different examples could be raised where this need would be vivid—such as hunting a deer in that same forest, or preferably, watching birds, or skiing down its icy hillsides after the leaves have fallen—as well as examples that switch scenarios altogether such as our need to drive on multi-lane highways at 120 kilometres per hour. (One might be tempted to return to the example with which we started: the daily dance of gazelles and their kin with lions and cheetahs on an African savannah. When it comes to thinking about the functional unity—or constitutive interdependence—of perception and action, such examples might seem more vivid, but only if one overlooks what it is like to run along a forest path or ski down an icy mountain when one theorizes.) From the first-person perspective, one experiences changing determinate features, and one can understand that it is necessary to experience changing determinate features as changes occur. How is this best achieved? By continuous update of representational content that does not involve the individuals and properties? Or by content that involves the individuals and properties? Considering the costliness of updating a representation of a complex natural scene—and the organizational difficulty of ensuring immediate access to just the needed portion of the ambient scene (already mentioned as the frame

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does not detect intervals of 13 milliseconds. The phenomenological datum stands. As a person turns her eyes away, she can no longer retain what she just saw in anything like the determinate detail of the experience itself. Many thanks to William Seager for suggesting this objection as a way of clarifying my point.

[12] Note that if one were inclined to press objections from well-worn (or worn-out) evil-genius types of scenarios, this datum can be used in rebuttal. If the evil genius is 'feeding' us our determinate experiences there would be no reason—stemming from the nature of experience itself—to suppose that he wouldn't feed them to us as our eyes shift (or close) while trying to retain the preceding experience in its determinacy. There is no reason to suppose this other than that he wanted to mislead us precisely in the direction of the sort of theory I am proposing, one that argues from the premise that we fail to retain or maintain perceptual experiences with equal determinacy to the conclusion that determinacy is a function of engagement. But at this point, the argument from an evil genius is resorting to ad hoc additions to pre-empt a specific theory rather than relying on facts that anyone might putatively discover about the character of her experiences.
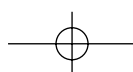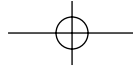
problem)—suggests that the best solution to the problem, and hence the best explanation, is that one is perceptually engaged with the world, engagements that involve the individuals and properties that one's activities concern. Culture-originating and culture-perpetuating animals are no different from other animals in this respect. The constitutive interdependence of perception and action indicates that the best explanation for real-time activity is that it is mutually supported by and supports object- and property-involving contents—contents that up-date 'for free' along with the changing surroundings.

This is the abbreviated case showing that the very fabric of perceptual consciousness is relational—or in my terms, that the determinate content of perceptual experience is engagement that involves determinate individuals and properties. It is an opening. The case proceeds from what perceptual experience is like from the first-person perspective and goes on to show that only one explanation is adequate to the facts. The more elaborated case will presumably be multifaceted and multi- or inter-disciplinary in nature, bringing together further research and explanations of different kinds that highlight different factors.

Briefly, here are but two of the needed tasks. One is to work out a precise account of perceptual content at the personal level. What needs explaining is how perceptual engagement is both conceptual and object- and property-involving. This possibility has been viewed with scepticism despite ground-breaking work by Gareth Evans (1982) and John McDowell (1986). Both have given detailed arguments for the "possibility of Fregean senses which are object-dependent" (McDowell 1986: 143). That is, both have argued that the leading insight from Frege—that senses or modes of presentation determine the individuation of mental contents—can be combined with the Russellian idea that there are genuinely singular contents that involve the object. Russell's insight was that "in order to entertain a proposition one must know how one's thinking represents things as being" (McDowell 1986: 140), an insight that entails that we can think singular thoughts only in so far as we know which object (or property) is being presented. This stringent requirement on genuine singular thought might seem to drive us inwards to a "highest common factor" (McDowell 1982/1998: 392–4) that we cannot fail to know. But appeal to the disjunctive insight shows that the retreat is not needed. Genuine singular thought can be intrinsically connected to the world (or engaged with it, in my terms) in a way that we can understand, even if we can, on occasion, be wrong in ways that we might not be able to discern. Together, these insights lead us to recognize the possibility that there are "Fregean thought-constituents (singular senses) which are object-dependent, generating an object-dependence in the thoughts in which they figure" (McDowell 1986: 142). These ideas, if fully developed—as, for one example, I have developed them in Sedivy (2006)—can explain the fact that perceptual content is both conceptual and object- and property-involving.

If we turn towards sub-personal explanations, it is clear that a variety of research is already beginning to show the constitutive interdependence of perception and action. Detailing aspects of that interdependence will show what it takes for perception to be a mode of engagement. One interesting issue here is that further research needs to
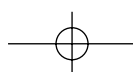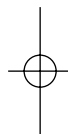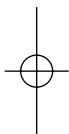
show whether our central nervous system *cannot* or mostly *does not* represent at the level of detail required for complex activity. That is, the reorientation I am suggesting leaves it an open matter awaiting empirical investigation whether:
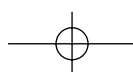
(a) The central nervous system (or CNS) *cannot* represent the determinate detail that is characteristic of perceptual experience and required for complex activity in a natural environment by means of self-standing contents that do not involve their objects. The computational costs and the cost for update in real time for action are too high. Humans mistakenly suppose that they can visualize with equal determinacy; and from the first-person viewpoint it mistakenly seems that dreams and hallucinations match the determinacy of perceptual experiences.

(b) The central nervous system *does not* represent the determinate detail that is characteristic of perceptual experience and required for complex activity when the animal is perceptually engaged with the environment, because the computational costs associated with representational contents that are not object-involving is too great and update in real time is either not possible or too costly. However, the CNS can represent at the same complexity of determinate detail during relatively brief and intermittent intervals by means of representational contents that are not object-involving.

Bringing these future elaborations into view gives but a sense of the multifaceted framework whose construction we can pursue. What we can already appreciate is how the determinacy of perceptual content propels us towards a new understanding of perception as a mode of engagement.
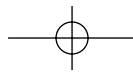
3 THE ROLE OF THE DISJUNCTIVE INSIGHT: EXPLAINING PERIPHERAL AND LIMITING CASES

Our trajectory shows that in an explanatory approach to perception, issues of fallibility need not come up at the very outset but at the point of refining the explanation to deal with errors or illusions, as well as hallucinations and dream states. The disjunctive insight is required at this juncture in the explanatory sequence. The approach taken here also indicates that determinate object-involving contents are the central condition and perceptual illusions, hallucinations, etc. are peripheral and limiting cases.[13] The secondary status of the latter sorts of states to fully engaged experiences follows from the fact that determinate content needs to involve its objects and properties.

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[13] This does not deny that the disjunctive insight might figure in a transcendental case for the interpenetrating nature of mind and world, a case for the very possibility of genuinely singular experiences and thoughts. Recall that this essay displays what I am calling a 'straightforward best explanation' of perception, while elaborating a direct realism that is integral to approaches that might begin from a transcendental case. The disjunctive insight may also figure in a transcendental case that starts from some undeniable facts of what perceptual experience is like, and goes on to show that only world-involving perceptual capacities could deliver such experiences. For an example, see John McDowell's essay in the present volume. Typically such arguments have started from the

Understood as peripheral cases, perceptual errors or illusions do not pose special explanatory challenges for this sort of approach (as they do for purely causal theories of mental contents) since perceptual content results from 'Fregean senses' or modes of presentation as well as the involved objects. But this approach has interesting implications for our understanding of hallucinations and dreams. The fact that determinate content needs to be object-involving entails that hallucinations and dreams have a secondary, dependent status, as I indicated.[14] It follows that dream states, for example, might have contents that either *are* indistinguishable or *seem to be* indistinguishable from waking states even though they are in fact not as determinate (see empirical possibilities (a) and (b) above). Other kinds of disengaged states might also have contents that mimic the sorts of contents we enjoy during normal engagement. But such disengaged states can only be intermittent or relatively isolated occurrences in contrast to the normal engaged, object-involving condition. Moreover, note the qualification that a hallucination or dream might only *seem* to be indistinguishable from an ongoing perceptual engagement. If determinate content is object- and property-involving, then disengaged states would not be determinate even though they might seem to be determinate—most would not be determinate or none would be determinate (again, see empirical possibilities (a) and (b) above). There is no denying this challenge to the transparency of the mental (the idea that when it comes to our mental states we cannot be mistaken about their contents or 'what they are like') even if a single essay cannot tilt at all the windmills in this domain.

In short, because an illusion, hallucination, or dream might at the moment of its occurrence be or seem to be as determinate as a perceptual experience, a theoretical specification of the nature of perception needs to take account of this fact with a disjunctive account of perceptual experience from the first-person viewpoint.[15] If we explain that

(i) Visual perception (for example) is a mode of perceptual engagement,
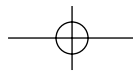
we need to go on to explain that

(ii) human beings are capable of a variety of fully engaged and disengaged states in the visual modality (as in any other perceptual modality);

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apparently spatial or objective nature of perceptual experience—since perceptual experience is at the very least as of spatial objects. But the determinate character of perceptual experience might also be a starting point for a transcendental case, as the previous section indicates. In fact, I have argued (2006) that the objective and the determinate character of perceptual experience is one complex phenomenon. But that issue lies beyond the scope of this essay, as does the possibility of using perceptual determinacy for a transcendental argument.

[14] It is also possible to argue from the objective, spatial nature of perceptual experiences to the same conclusion: that engagement is the central condition that makes a variety of peripheral or limiting cases possible. These two facts about perceptual content—its objective, spatial nature and its determinacy—are connected, as I indicated, though I cannot make the case here (2006).

[15] There is also a sense in which our ordinary mature understanding of ourselves has a disjunctive structure. A person understands that she might occasionally be in a disengaged state that mimics engagement without being able to figure this out, and this insight needs to be available to her as she engages with her world.
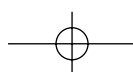
and that

(iii) from the first-person perspective, perceptual experience is marked by the disjunctive possibility that one might on isolated occasions be in a disengaged state rather than engaged, without being able to figure it out oneself—a possibility that the experiencing person needs in some sense to grasp.

Locating the disjunctive insight within the approach rather than at the outset—as an explanation of peripheral and limiting phenomena made possible by the central engaged condition—does not imply that theory of knowledge is less important than we have thought. The point is to show how theory of mind and theory of knowledge work together as mutual partners within an explanation of perception. In contrast, epistemically motivated disjunctive theories of perception that begin from sceptical scenarios leave open the thought that if we could solve our epistemic problems in an alternative way, well then, so much the worse for a disjunctive structure—it can fall by the wayside. A disjunctive approach is on a firmer, less optional, footing in so far as it is required by the facts of perception, and other facts of the engaged human condition. Alternative ways of explaining a set of facts is always an issue as well, but I am suggesting that the determinacy of perception doesn't allow for alternative explanation: determinate perceptual experience is the central case that allows for peripheral or limiting cases that might mimic determinate engagement in its absence.

Finally, there is the question about the status of the disjunctive thesis—is it only epistemic or metaphysical as well? I must confess to discomfort on this point. The thesis is epistemic since it denies that perceptions and other states from which perceptions might be indistinguishable have the same epistemic standing. Does the thesis hold that these various kinds of states do not share any important metaphysical properties (in so far as being indistinguishable is not taken as an important metaphysical property)? I have argued that the states at issue are contentful states with contents of different kinds and I am uncomfortable about talking about contents in metaphysical terms (Sedivy 2004). Just as I have avoided any mention of 'disjunctivism', preferring to discuss the disjunctive insight (since that is what I believe is at stake), so I would prefer to leave metaphysics out of the discussion when it comes to experiential contents and stick to detailed analysis of the different varieties and the relationships between them.

4 THE SECOND HURDLE FOR DIRECT REALISM: IS IT THE WORLD WE ENGAGE WITH?

In so far as our scientific picture or our basically empiricist metaphysics holds that what is out there is quite different from our ways of understanding or perceiving it, it could not be mind-independent individuals and properties that our perceptual experience involves. Hence this dominant metaphysical framework blocks direct realism in any form, including conceptualist varieties. After all, conceptualist realism claims that our perceptual, conceptual engagement with the world captures determinate individuals and properties in its net. Here are two answers to the metaphysical
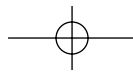
discomfort with the conceptual, direct realist proposal that perception engages us with the world—that perceptual modes of presentation can get the world's determinate individuals and properties in their net. Both answers turn on legitimating a "non-objectifying" (McDowell 1982/1998: 392) view of the world as well as of our selves.
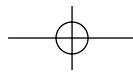
4.1 First response: from interpretivism

A broadly interpretivist theoretical framework requires multiple explanations not only of ourselves but also of the world with which we interact—though this seems not to have received as much airtime in theory-of-mind discussions. The requisite variety of explanations will include not only the 'objectifying' ones suitable for explaining the sub-personal processes and external conditions that enable an animal's or person's capacities, but also the 'non-objectifying' explanations appropriate to persons and world, animals and habitats.

I am not suggesting the need to subscribe to either Davidson's (1984) or Dennett's (1978a, 1987) particular forms of interpretivism, but rather to point out what their brands of interpretivism and indeed any broadly interpretivist approach are committed to. It is useful to point out this commitment, precisely because many people do buy into either a Dennettian or a Davidsonian interpretivist approach, or into a more broadly conceived framework along such lines. The broader framework to which many of us subscribe even if we don't think that Davidson or Dennett get it quite right can be summed up as the insight that entities—individual members of kinds or determinate instances of properties—figure in explanations. What it is for there to be such entities is to figure in a certain kind of explanation, an explanation that captures patterns that cannot be captured by any other kind of explanation.

Davidson and Dennett make clear that complex systems require more than one kind of explanation. What is it to be a person or an intentional system? It is to be intelligible as a person or intentional system—but not only as a person or intentional system. The complexity is such that a complete understanding would involve other explanations as well—sub-personal or sub-intentional system explanations that give us insight into the workings of the parts of persons that causally enable a person's complex capacities. To be intelligible as a person (I am going to drop the longer intentional system phrase from here on) requires attributing representational and presentational capacities, states, and utterances. But what are these capacities, states, and utterances about? They are about the shiny red apples that we like to eat, the grey clouds that indicate rain, the eye-stopping scarlet that a maple leaf becomes. In so far as a person's true beliefs are about the beautiful progression of colours in a particular deciduous forest in the autumn, then it is a beautiful progression of colours in that autumn forest that is in her surroundings. What surrounds the sub-personal states that help make those beliefs possible? The relevant explanatory factors might be light waves and surfaces that reflect different portions of light waves, but this explanation is not quite settled yet and we need not take sides for our purposes here. Just as we recognize that we need to give more than one account about
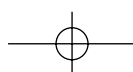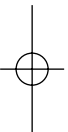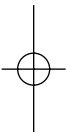
persons, we also need to give more than one account about the surroundings that the person's beliefs, wishes, fears, and perceptual experiences involve and concern. And there need be no conflict between these explanations. It is wavelengths of light that affect my sub-personal workings. It is colours that affect me. A person's environment, unlike the surroundings of her sub-personal parts, consists of the colours, sounds, tastes, smells, buildings, roads, cars, and other individuals and properties on which she acts—in short, a person's environment is the world. This brings me to the second answer.
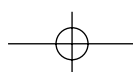
Let's quickly summarize first. Interpretivism makes salient two points: (1) that entities figure in explanations; and (2) that complex systems or organisms require more than one kind of explanation—a point that carries over to the surroundings of a complex system, what it engages with, as well as the system itself.
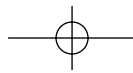
These two points concern us as well as animals and other complex systems. Yet we also need to be able to distinguish between the habitat that first-nature animals engage with, and the world with which second-nature or culture-originating animals engage. Depending on how interpretivism is developed, for example in Davidson's hands or in Dennett's, it might be able to make this further distinction between persons and world on the one hand, and animals and habitat on the other. I would like to highlight a different set of resources for this insight.

4.2 Second response: from Wittgensteinian Realism with a Human Face

Wittgensteinian Realism with a Human Face develops distinctive resources—which focus on human practices and their dimension of rule-following—for understanding ourselves specifically as inseparable from the world.[16] What makes this realism is that it attempts to give us a new understanding of objectivity that replaces our sense of the objective as that which does not involve ineliminable mention of our selves. The objective—be it facts, values, or simply 'the world'—is co-constitutive with ourselves, so the very fabric of the world is not something whose specification can be independent of reference to us and our activities. Realism with a human face gives us the extra bit that we need to address the worry that it can't possibly be the world—the world of brightly coloured, annoyingly revved-up sports cars zooming by—that we are engaged with perceptually and through our bodily actions. If successful, realism with a human face shows how a non-objectifying explanation can contribute to our understanding of our selves and our relationship with the world.

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[16] This wonderful phrase is Hilary Putnam's (1990). What is lovely about it, in part, is that it suggests that there is nothing naïve about such realism, even if it doesn't do so well during our time, rather like socialism with a human face, crushed as it is by tanks at one point in its history, at another by the rush of multinational corporations. But what makes Putnam's phrase theoretically important is that it highlights the fundamental issue when we think about the possibility of realism and declares its stance on that issue. Realism is problematic because we cannot but recognize the contingency of our engagement with the world, from the nature of our perceptual modalities to the practices we strive to refine. Realism with a human face argues that it is precisely our contingency that makes realism possible.
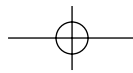
Wittgenstein develops the idea of mutuality between persons and world by focusing on human practices or forms of human life activities and on the fact that such practices are largely rule-governed, or informed and constrained by norms and standards. Just as rule-following transfigures human animals into persons (human animals with a second nature), so rule-following opens up the domain of objective facts and values within which human lives take place and with which human beings must deal. Ways of acting come together with what those actions involve and concern, and ways of judging come together with what those judgements involve and concern.

Here is a quick sketch. It falls into three parts. First, I will quickly go over Wittgenstein's leading ideas about rule-following. This will allow two further sketches: of the way in which rule-following yields second nature, and of the way in which rule-following brings "into view" but not "into being" (McDowell 1996: 285) an objective world—of determinate individual members of kinds and determinate instances of properties—that is inseparable from second nature. The core phenomenon of rule-following shows that the two—second natures and objective world—are like two sides of single coin; or, in other words that realism comes with a human face.

If it seems odd that this essay should now turn into a somewhat extended discussion of Wittgenstein's thought—well, that is part of the point, too. Starting out by asking how we are intelligible (perhaps considering intergalactic visitors along the way) is in no sense disjoint from learning from Wittgenstein's later work. Contemporary theory of mind that strives to understand perception and the nature of perceptual content is in no sense disjoint from learning from Wittgenstein's later work. Neither is contemporary epistemology.

(i) Wittgenstein's discussions of rule-following try to transform our understanding of ourselves and of our place in the world by bringing the dimension of communal practices and customs into focus. Practices come into view when we see that we are following rules throughout our various activities—many that we take to be cognitive, solitary achievements—and that following rules involves membership in a practice, a public communal way of going on. This is Wittgenstein's controversial suggestion that "To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions)" and "'obeying a rule' is a practice" (Wittgenstein 1953: sections 199 and 202). In what has been cast as an argument against the possibility of private language or private rule-following, Wittgenstein shows that rule-following requires a public context that functions—in myriad ways that he explores and details—as the repository of criteria of correctness that are independent of any individual rule-follower but that are brought to bear on each. If criteria of correctness were not independent of each individual, then one might claim any behaviour to follow a certain rule. Consider the opposite: the absence of extant practices in which it is determinate what the rules specify. In such a case, if it seems to me that adding by 1 up to 1000 and by 2 after 1000 follows the rule '+1', for example, then—it does! But if this were all rule-following amounts to, then the idea that we follow determinate
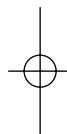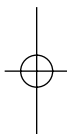
rules is empty—without established practices the very notion of a determinate rule would be empty.

And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it. (Wittgenstein 1953: section 202)

Though this is the most controversial, it is only one of the interwoven considerations pointing in the same direction. Criteria of correctness that are independent of any individual are extant in our practices, in the way we do things at the level of communities, and are internalized by individuals through training. This does not suggest that all there is to criteria of correctness is communal agreement in practice, or that communal agreement determines what is correct and what is incorrect. Rather, the struggle is to understand how it is that human practices bring criteria of correctness "into view" though not "into being", to echo John McDowell's phrasing.[17] The second and third steps—showing how rule-following opens up both second nature and an objective world—strive to give substance to that distinction.

(ii) The second point in my summary above—about internalization through training—is just as key as the first about the need for criteria of correctness that are independent of individuals. Recognizing that rule-following requires established practices is only part of the point; the other part is to recognize the extent to which all aspects of ourselves involve the internalization of rules through training and hence involve the context of established practices. Many of the interweaving threads in Wittgenstein's examinations of rule-following strive to elicit this recognition. The picture of ourselves that emerges is of a piece—perhaps surprisingly—with Aristotle's account of moral virtue as second nature in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[18] The affinity is clear as soon as we notice that both Aristotle and Wittgenstein stress the role of *training*, the process of instilling immediate non-interpretive rule-following. Training instils ways of acting and reacting across the multitudinous situations that comprise our forms of life. Hence it is the process by means of which we acquire what we might call a 'second nature', following Aristotle. The concept of second nature is the notion of acquired ways of acting that are instilled through training to the point of seamless automaticity. It is precisely the idea of unreflective, immediate rule-following—of cultural norm-governed ways of being. "When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*" (Wittgenstein 1953: section 219). Aristotle develops the idea of second nature with respect to our moral nature. Wittgenstein's investigations indicate the same kind of account, though not in the same terms, but take it further by exploring how myriad activities involve rule-following.

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[17] In the following two sections I am trying to capture with a somewhat different focus the point that John McDowell has articulated vividly with this distinction: "acquiring a second nature brings the demands of reason into view (a view that may be skewed or inaccurate in some respects). It does not bring them into being." (1996: 285).

[18] Here I am of course springing off from McDowell's suggestion to this effect in his (1994), especially Lecture IV.
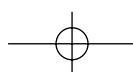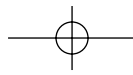
According to Aristotle, we become moral persons by being trained—when we are uncomprehending children—into doing the right thing across various circumstances to the point of automaticity, the point where we just react to our circumstances by doing the right thing. Only at this point—where we *react* to the moral possibilities in our circumstances with the right action—can we reflect on our actions; understand why a certain way of acting—being truthful, for example—is morally virtuous or correct, and freely choose it. It is only at that juncture—where a reaction is also a free choice—that an action is moral. Aristotle's point is that one can't understand why one should be moral unless one already is moral. One can't freely choose moral actions unless one already acts morally.

This is a picture of our selves as animals with a second nature: our first animal nature (which, for example, responds to reward and punishment and enables us, members of one species, to respond similarly in similar circumstances) becomes transfigured into a norm-governed second nature through training into ways of acting and reacting. Wittgenstein's examinations of rule-following suggest the same sort of account. We have seen that these investigations culminate, in part, in the recognition that when I understand another's speech or say something myself I am participating in "*customs* (uses, institutions)" (1953: section 199). Rather than focusing on the fact that we are moral agents, Wittgenstein examines the fact that we are 'thinking beings' by showing that thinking—applying concepts, making descriptions or reports with those concepts, etc.—involves rule-following no less than what we think of as moral action. Aristotle's account presupposes a cultural communal context. This might not seem startling when moral training is at issue. But the point becomes controversial when its generality is pointed out: rule-following of any kind involves training, which requires a larger context where we are held responsible to norms of correct behaviour. By showing that our various cognitive capabilities involve following rules—and involve second-nature reactions and judgements—Wittgenstein's investigations show that practices supply the required context for every aspect of our emergent second-nature selves. It takes a village to raise a child.[19]
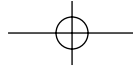
But how is this realism? What about the world and our place in it? How do the ubiquity of rules and practices yield realism? If criteria of correctness are extant in practices, which are norm-governed ways of doing things at the level of communities, then what vouchsafes the practices? These questions lead to the third step of showing how rule-following not only transfigures animals into second nature, but opens up the world in which they act as well.[20]

(iii) Wittgenstein stresses that our practices are ours—with the full historical contingency that this entails. Yet Wittgenstein's point is that stress on the contingency of our practices also shows the objectivity of what we thereby do.

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[19] It is in his epistemological work that Wittgenstein (1969) investigates the ubiquity of rule-following that is constitutive of our second nature.

[20] This last question of course raises the possibility of interpreting Wittgenstein as an anti-realist rather than a realist, as some currently do. But it is not my responsibility in this essay to offer that putative interpretation.
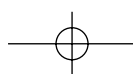
"So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life. (Wittgenstein 1953: section 241)
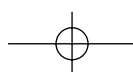
If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements. This seems to abolish logic, but does not do so.—It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement. (Wittgenstein 1953: section 242)

For there to be measurement of length is for there to be users of measurement with a perceived need for measurement who can agree in what it is to follow the constitutive rules of measurement. And the agreement must be unproblematic, seamless—something that we take for granted once we have been taught how to measure (that is, once we have been trained into the practices in which measurement is an integral part—or practices of measurement, in shorthand). There must even be some constancy in the measurements that are obtained, as Wittgenstein points out. But to make all this clear is also to make clear that the results of measurement are not thereby determined as well. In so far as I have been trained into the practices of measuring, I can use a measuring tape to figure out the length of this room—but this in no way determines the length of the room. That the room is *metres* or *yards* long is a contingent fact determined by our practices of measurement. There is even a sense in which the fact that the room is measurable and has a *length* is contingent on there being practices of measurement of length at all. But *what* length the room is measured to be in metres or yards is not contingent on our practices. While this point tends to be clear and unproblematic when it comes to measurement in metres or yards, it seems to become elusive and controversial when applied to language: to language games and to the words that fulfil the same sort of role across our myriad practices as metres or yards do when we measure. But if we accept the point about measurement, we cannot reject what is the same point concerning language.
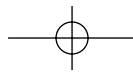
The agreement, the harmony, of thought and reality consists in this: if I say falsely that something is *red*, then, for all that, it isn't *red*. And when I want to explain the word "red" to someone in the sentence "That is not read", I do it by pointing to something red. (Wittgenstein 1953: section 429)[21]

   Yes, forms of life that involve explicitly identifying colours are our forms of life. Forms of life that involve practices of measurement are our forms of life. But that does not mean that practices of measurement are merely ours—as if we impose measurement on a world that stands constitutively apart from us as a bare presence. Forms of life that involve practices of measurement do so because the world is such as to

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[21] Section 429 of Wittgenstein (1953) is set up by its companion section 428, which discusses how we lead ourselves astray into apparently metaphysical waters when we stop to think and to theorize about the ability of our meanings or our thoughts to reach out to the facts: " 'This queer thing, thought'—but it does not strike us as queer when we are thinking. Thought does not strike us as mysterious while we are thinking, but only when we say, as it were retrospectively: 'How was that possible?' How was it possible for thought to deal with the very object itself? We feel as if by means of it we had caught reality in our net" (Wittgenstein 1953: section 428).
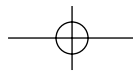
be measurable—given that, of course, there are forms of life in that world in which practices of measurement have a place—though, of course, there are forms of life in which measurement has a place only in so far as the world is measurable.

We can begin to grasp this mutuality by following Wittgenstein's stress on activity. He emphasizes repeatedly across various contexts that 'at bottom' are activities—rule- or norm-governed ways of acting in the world that have been instilled through training. His image of *striking 'bedrock'* evokes this inescapable fact of the human condition: that when we press to justify our ways of going on, we find that our justifications run out in our ways of acting—this is how I act, this is how I have been trained to react. And it is in the world that we act, of course. That action is in the world and on the world—enabled and constrained by the world—is implicit in the notion of action. Hence it is perhaps easy to overlook.[22] But it gives substance to the contrast between bringing something—a certain fact, for example—into being and bringing it into view. That wheat is nutritious is not brought into being by our activities. But it is brought into view by our activities and cannot be in view without them, or analogous practices of harvesting seeds, breaking them down, etc. This is the point about measurement and colours, cited from Wittgenstein's text above.

Our activities are constituted in a reciprocally evolving relationship between the possibilities for action in the world and our possibilities. This is the sense in which forms of life—we might more fully say forms of life activities—are co-constitutive for persons and world; the sense in which it is forms of life that open a mutuality of persons and world, languages and facts, actions and values. In so far as forms of life are co-constitutive, facts or values are not one-sidedly of our making or up to us—the persons who are co-constituted with the world. This is realism with a human face. In struggling with such realism we are struggling with changing our understanding of objectivity. The notion of the objective—of objective facts or objective descriptions of such facts, for example, is not of a description that does not involve an essential (or ineliminable) reference to ourselves, the beings to whom such facts can be evident or who articulate such descriptions. We have a fairly recent though potent history of supposing that an objective description is one that must not mention us and that the objectivity of the world is the objectivity of a bare presence that does not involve us in any way. On this sort of view, any aspect that requires that its specification involves ineliminable mention of our selves is not objective, not part of the 'fabric of the world', but a projection of ours onto the bare presence that is really the world. This is the view that Wittgenstein tries to displace by detailing the mutuality between the objective—be it individual members of kinds or determinate instances

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[22] "How can he know how he is to continue a pattern by himself—whatever instruction you give him?—Well, how do I know?—If that means 'Have I reasons?' the answer is: my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons" (Wittgenstein 1953: section 428); "The end is not an ungrounded presupposition; it is an ungrounded way of acting" (Wittgenstein 1969: section 110); " 'How am I able to obey a rule?'—if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do. If I have exhausted the justification I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'. (Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the definition a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.)" (Wittgenstein 1953: section 217).

of properties, facts, descriptions, values, or simply 'the world'—and ourselves. Detailing the mutuality between persons and the world shows that realism is available to us, so long as it is realism with a human face.
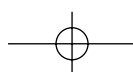
Let's be clear how realism of this stripe was contained in the notion of rule-following and second nature with which we began. Just as rule-following transfigures human animals into persons (human animals with a second nature), so rule-following *opens up* the domain of objective facts and values within which human lives take place and with which human beings deal (by harvesting and 'measuring' and otherwise). Ways of acting come together with what those actions involve and concern, and ways of judging come together with what those judgements involve and concern. Ways of measuring, one might say, come together with what ways of measuring concern—the measurable. Training opens up a mutuality of activity with circumstances and objects of activity just as it makes immediately available a mutuality of judging with circumstances and objects of judging. To be trained into second nature is to react to one's circumstances appropriately. This is equivalent to saying that in so far as I *immediately react* to objects or layouts as having lengths, length is *immediately there*. Reactions and circumstances of reactions entail one another. This was Aristotle's point. His account of what it takes to be moral also addresses our meta-ethical anxieties, explaining how morality can be a real dimension of the world. What is it for there to be moral possibilities in our circumstances? It is for us to react to moral possibilities in our circumstances so that we can rationally assess and choose them. The Aristotelian notion of second nature puts in place a mutuality of moral agents and moral circumstances. What we might call its Wittgensteinian extension puts a broader mutuality in place—of activity with circumstances and objects of activity and judging with circumstances and objects of judging. Contingency and objectivity are not strange bedfellows after all. And immediacy is a key ingredient in their kinship.

Wittgensteinian realism with a human face and interpretivism are but two entry-points to the idea that the world of objective facts and values is inseparable from what we are. Individual members of kinds and determinate instances of properties make up this world and we are perceptually engaged with them.

5 CONCLUSION

Considerations of intelligibility, explanation, and interpretation; conceptualist realism and Wittgensteinian realism with a human face; Fregean senses and Russellian singular thoughts; individual- and property-involving modes of presentation and their sub-personal enabling conditions—this essay has touched on these and more besides. They are just some of the ideas and approaches that might cross-fertilize in understanding our perceptual engagement with the world. It is in this complex, I am suggesting, that the disjunctive insight finds its proper realization, in so far as that insight beckons us to take a fresh start.

This essay has focused on the determinacy of perceptual experience—which is evident from both third- and first-person explanatory perspectives—in order to undertake a new start. It has also detailed a conceptualist approach to our selves as

explanatorily inseparable from the world to show the contributions that a non-objectifying approach can make. Here is a summary of the explanatory package—a package that could not be on offer without the disjunctive insight at its core.

(1) The best explanation of the perceptual capacities of complex mobile organisms is that such capacities engage the animal with the individuals with which it interacts and with the determinate properties that are relevant to its activities.

(2) The best explanation of the fact that human perceptual experience is determinately detailed to a point that outruns *retention* (let alone recall) is that human perceptual experience is engagement with individuals and determinate properties. This means that the content of perceptual experience is object- and property-involving (as well as conceptual).

(3) To account for the possibility that, from the first-person perspective, human perceptual engagement might be or seem to be indistinguishable on occasion from various disengaged states, experiences need to be construed disjunctively as either perceptual engagements or disengaged conditions whose content might mimic the individual- and property-involving content distinctive of perceptual engagement.

(4) The disjunctive approach is required by the facts of perception, by the need to explain perceptual engagement and its peripheral and limiting cases. (It may have other theoretical uses as well, such as playing a pivotal role in transcendental arguments.)

(5) Since (i) the explanations in which persons figure are also necessarily the explanations in which the world figures, and (ii) persons and world are mutually constitutive and inseparable, it is the world—of individual members of kinds, determinate instances of properties, facts, and values—that we represent, that we understand and with which we are actively and perceptually engaged.

Isn't this the understanding we already share?

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