

Visual Perception
as a
Means of Knowing

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I, Craig French, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own, except where indicated.

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Abstract

This thesis falls into two parts, a characterizing part, and an explanatory part. In the first part, I outline some of the core aspects of our ordinary understanding of visual perception, and how we regard it as a means of knowing. What explains the fact that I know that the lemon before me is yellow is my visual perception: I know that the lemon is yellow *because* I can see it. Some explanations of how one knows specify that in virtue of which one genuinely *knows*, as opposed to merely believes, some content. Such explanations are epistemically satisfactory explanations. We think that visual perceptual explanations of knowledge can be epistemically satisfactory. I argue that that is what it is to regard visual perception as being among our means of knowing. In the second part, I explore how we might explain the fact that visual perception is a means of knowing (assuming that it is a fact). I ask what makes it the case that visual perception is a means of knowing (in the way we ordinarily think that it is)? I suggest that part of the answer to this question is that visual perception, given the nature it has, has a reason giving role. And that is just to say that the nature of visual perception is such that visually perceiving can ensure the satisfaction of some important condition on knowledge (namely, that if one knows that something is the case one must have a good reason to believe that it is the case). In concluding I suggest that giving this sort of explanation doesn't require a specific theory of perception.

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Introduction

This thesis concerns visual perception and its status as a means of knowing. The thesis falls into two parts, distinguished according to two questions. In Part I – the characterizing part – I ask: How are we to characterize, in philosophically useful terms, our ordinary conception of visual perception, and our ordinary understanding of the way in which it is a means of knowing? In Part II – the explanatory part – I ask: What makes it the case that visual perception is a means of knowing in the way we ordinarily suppose it is? In this Introduction I will give a broad overview of what’s to come in the Chapters that follow.

Chapters 1–3 make up Part I of this thesis. In Chapter 1 I flesh out our ordinary conception of visual perception. Here, by ‘visual perception’—or, as I’ll also say, ‘seeing’—I mean the visual perception of a visible entity. So, my interest is more specific than an interest in the capacity to see, or in what typically happens—seeing—when a sighted individual opens their eyes in a well lit room. I am interested in the capacity to see (or seeing) only insofar as it is exercised with respect to some perceptible entity—cases in which there is genuine perceptual contact with some thing. I will occasionally refer to seeing or visual perception understood as such as ‘*thing seeing*’. And here ‘thing’ is a dummy term, which is, as Dretske (1979) puts it, ‘intended to cover such disparate items as tables, houses, cats, people, games, sunsets, signals, tracks, shadows, movements, flashes, and specks’ (p. 98).

I begin Chapter 1 by discussing some of our visual perceptual vocabulary. I discuss this because attention to some of the ways we give expression to visual perception in ordinary language helps to uncover some of the commitments involved in our ordinary conception of visual perception. Following on from that, I suggest that we can flesh out our ordinary

conception of visual perception in this way: seeing an entity x , is a mode of conscious awareness in which a conscious being is related to a visible entity. There are many different kinds of entities which conscious beings capable of visual perception can be so related to. (But in being potential objects of visual perception they must be spatial entities which have looks). In being a mode of conscious awareness visual perception of x involves an experience with some conscious character. One cannot see x unless x seems or looks or appears some way or other to one. Typically, the most natural and faithful descriptions of the characters of such experiences make reference to what is present to one in visual perception—seen entities and their manifest visible features. I also suggest that we regard visual perception as non-doxastic and non-epistemic in a sense.

In addition to what I've just mentioned, a crucial aspect to our ordinary conception of seeing is that we regard it as epistemically significant. That is, it is part of our ordinary thought and talk about visual perception that it is a means of knowing. What this involves, I suggest, is a commitment to the idea that we can know things by seeing entities in our environments. For example, in appropriate conditions, S can know that the lemon before her is yellow by seeing it. But how are we to properly characterize the content of this pre-theoretic commitment? In Chapters 2 and 3 I suggest that a good way to characterize this commitment is in terms of Cassam's (2007b) explanatory conception of means of knowing. The characterization of our commitment to the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing thus has the following content: *visual perception is capable of explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions (how some S knows some p in that range) in an epistemically satisfactory way*. In Chapter 2 I spell this out in some detail. And in Chapter 3 I try to show that this is an accurate way of capturing our *pre-theoretic* understanding of how visual perception is a means of knowing.

The idea here is that insofar as we take visual perception to be a means of knowing, we take it to have a knowledge *explaining* role. S 's seeing the lemon is the means by which she knows that the lemon is yellow, and what this amounts to is that her seeing the lemon is what explains how she knows that the lemon is yellow. To say that S knows that the lemon is yellow because she sees it, is to offer more than a story, given in terms of visual perception, about why or how S came to believe that the lemon

before her is yellow. We pre-theoretically think that the fact that *S* sees the lemon is (an element of) that in virtue of which she *knows*—as opposed to merely believes—that the lemon is yellow. *S*'s seeing the lemon, we think, explains how she knows that the lemon is yellow, in an *epistemically* satisfactory way.

This, in outline, is how I flesh out how we ordinarily think of visual perception and its relation to knowledge. I concede that these ordinary commitments might be plain wrong, partly wrong, deeply confused, etc etc. Here are three ways in which one might reject our ordinary conception of visual perception, or aspects of it (there are no doubt other ways): (1) One might argue that visual perception isn't a relation to a mind-independent spatial entity which looks some way. One may then add that it is, instead, a relation to a mind-dependent entity, a sense-datum or an Idea. One might add to this that "strictly speaking" we see such entities, not ordinary objects, events, and the like. Versions of the arguments from illusion, and hallucination, aim to persuade us of such claims. (2) One might endorse a sort of coherentism on which it is agreed that visual perception has all of the features we ordinarily suppose it has but for the epistemic features. That is, one might suppose that visual perception gives us beliefs, it causes us to believe certain things, but it is irrelevant to those beliefs having whatever epistemic credentials they may have. If a visually based belief meets the standards required to count as knowledge, that is *purely* a matter of how it coheres with and relates to other beliefs. (3) One might endorse a form of epistemological scepticism—and there are a plethora of sceptical arguments which recommend such a stance. One might say: we don't have any knowledge (at least, we don't have any empirical knowledge). We may ordinarily suppose that visual perception can provide us with (empirical) knowledge, but, in fact, nothing can.

I am not dismissive of such positions and the challenges they provide to our ordinary ways of thinking. But I will bracket them in this thesis. No claim is made here that there is anything answering to our ordinary conception of visual perception. I will just assume that there is such a thing as visual perception and that it is, at least roughly, as we ordinarily conceive of it. My goal in Part I is not to defend our ordinary conception of visual perception, but rather to describe and characterize it. This, I

think, is what one should do if one then wants to defend our ordinary ways of thinking.

But even in Part II my aim is not to defend our ordinary ways of thinking about visual perception and its relation to knowledge. I assume that visual perception is as we ordinarily suppose it is, and ask: how can we account for or explain, philosophically, visual perception's epistemic significance? This is a question which, following Cassam, I call *the question of explanation*. In addressing it, I consider the prospects for what I call a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. I introduce the question and this sort of answer in Chapter 4. A Reasons Answer to the question of explanation aims to explain the fact that visual perception is a means of knowing (in the way we ordinarily suppose it is) in terms of the idea that it has a reason giving role. More exactly, A Reasons Answer involves three crucial claims

- (1) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition. (That is, *S* knows that *p* only if *S* has good reason to believe that *p*).
- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied.
- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

I think these claims are plausible, and so will argue for a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation (subject to various qualifications and restrictions discussed in the Chapters below).

In Chapter 4 I spend a good deal of time discussing McDowell's epistemology, and McDowell's account of seeing (core works here are McDowell (1994, 1998a,d)). Part of the point of this that McDowell has the resources to give a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation of the form I am interested in. So I focus the discussion around McDowell's views, and discuss the prospects for a McDowellian Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. This discussion, I suggest, gives us support for (1) and (2).

On McDowell's view we are to flesh out (3) in terms of the idea that it is of the nature of seeing that it is conceptual (I discuss in detail what this means in Chapter 4). But McDowell has a further commitment. He

thinks that seeing can be reason giving *only if* it is conceptual. In Chapter 5 I attempt to undermine this view and McDowell's arguments for it. I proceed dialectically by setting out a relationalist view of seeing. On this view, seeing is not conceptual—in fact, it is not representational at all. Yet, I aim to show, it is perfectly intelligible that seeing can be reason giving even if it has the nature the relationalist supposes it has.

It might seem that if we want to defend a Reasons Answer, we have to have (3) in place fleshed out by some specific theory of seeing. For instance, a McDowellian theory, or a relationalist theory, or some other theory. But I question this assumption. I suggest that the discussion I offer in Part II of this thesis helps us to see how we can hold on to (3), and flesh it out just in terms of some of the constitutive features of seeing which *all theories* agree on (so long as they are theories which aim to account for visual perception as we ordinarily understand it). More specifically, I suggest that (3) can be fleshed out in this way: because visual perception is relational and a mode of conscious awareness—because it has *that* nature—it can make it the case that some constitutive feature on knowledge—the reasons condition—is satisfied. Thus, I offer a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation which is relatively theory neutral when it comes to the metaphysics of seeing.

Before I begin, let me note briefly that although I focus on just visual perception I don't claim that my claims will apply to perception in other modalities. Thus, this thesis isn't 'visuocentric' in the pejorative sense employed by O'Callaghan (2007)—where a visuocentric view is a view of perception in general which is simply, and implausibly, a generalization from of a view of visual perception specifically. Though visual perception is, obviously, *central*, to the study that follows. There is, as we'll see (and as is probably already obvious), so much to be said about visual perception and its epistemic significance, and so much more to be said than what I've managed to say here. A broader focus would allow much less to be said. I hope in future work to address perceptual knowledge acquired by non-visual means. But for now, the focus is on just visual perception as a means of knowing.

Part I

The Characterizing Part

Chapter I

Our Ordinary Conception of Visual Perception

I.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I begin the characterizing part of the thesis where the aim is to characterize, in philosophically useful terms, our ordinary conception of visual perception, and our ordinary understanding of the way in which it is a means of knowing. The question I address in the current Chapter is: What is the content of our ordinary conception of visual perception? In addressing this question I will be selective. I will discuss just those features which are at the core of our ordinary understanding of visual perception, and which are relevant to the enquiry that follows. With the material from this Chapter in place we will be in a position to consider how we conceive of the way in which visual perception is a means of knowing. And when we have considered that, we will be in a position to consider how to account for the fact that visual perception is a means of knowing in the way we ordinarily suppose it is.

I mean just to elucidate and flesh out some of the content of our ordinary conception of visual perception. This will involve describing the commitments we have in virtue of having the conception of visual perception we have, and some of what those commitments entail. Some of these commitments are best thought of as implicit commitments. Such commitments can be revealed, or teased out, by considering the pre-theoretic judgements about cases that we are likely to make, and the entailments of such judgements—judgements which we are equipped to make thanks

to our more explicit understanding. There is a good sense in which this is a sort of conceptual analysis. But the task here is not one of finding necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the concept *visual perception*. Nor is the task one of finding more basic concepts in virtue of which we can explicate that concept. The point is rather to highlight, describe, and where necessary explain and clarify, aspects of our ordinary conception of visual perception, and some of what that conception entails.

The task here is nothing like that of giving a theory of visual perception with reference to how we ordinarily think of it. There are many different theoretical approaches one might take to visual perception. In philosophy or science one might develop a theory of what visual perception is, and how it works. But as I understand it our ordinary conception of visual perception is not a theory, nor is my characterization of it. I will take it that our ordinary conception of visual perception, and my characterization of it, are relatively theory neutral with respect to those philosophical theories of perception which aim to account for perception as we ordinarily think of it (as opposed to those theories which would recommend a rejection of our ordinary conception)—I indicate ways in which this is so at some relevant points in the discussion that follows. Moreover, our ordinary conception of visual perception seems to be incomplete in some respects. There are questions that we might want to give determinate answers to in a theory of visual perception which our ordinary conception of visual perception is simply non-committal on. I'll indicate some such aspects in the discussion below.

I will describe and characterize our conception of visual perception in philosophical terms. I will often make claims of the form: "According to our ordinary conception of visual perception ..." where what fills the ellipsis is a characterization of some aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception which makes use of concepts familiar to the philosopher. But this is not to say that I am describing our conception of visual perception from the perspective of an antecedently held philosophical *theory* of perception. And there is no suggestion that the philosophical concepts I draw on in the characterization must be possessed by one who has the conception of visual perception. I think the conception of visual perception I describe is more primitive than that. I take it that we typi-

cally come to some sort of understanding of seeing in our everyday lives without acquiring, and certainly without drawing on, concepts which are special to disciplines such as those constituted by branches of philosophy and science. So there is no suggestion here that one who possesses the conception of visual perception being characterized will be able to themselves characterize or articulate it using the philosophical concepts I employ.

In looking at our ordinary conception of visual perception I make reference throughout to some of the ordinary ways we have of talking about it—those ways which manifest aspects our ordinary thought about visual perception. Because of this I have given over a large section to discussion of visual perceptual vocabulary (section (1.2)). This discussion will also serve as a useful reference point for further Chapters. In section (1.3) I discuss some core aspects of our ordinary conception of visual perception. I begin by discussing how we conceive of seeing an entity as a sort of relation to that entity (section (1.3.1)). I then discuss how we conceive of features insofar as we take them to be visible features (section (1.3.2)). I move on to discuss how we think of visual perception as a mode of conscious awareness (section (1.3.3)). I then discuss how we conceive of the subjects of visual perception (section (1.3.4)). I end by discussing how we conceive of the relationship between visual perception and belief (section (1.4)).

1.2 Visual Perceptual Vocabulary

In this section I'll distinguish and discuss two perceptual senses of 'see' which will be relevant in the enquiry that follows. (Some of the current section is a development of my (2012)). I'll also say a bit about how we conceive of entities insofar as we conceive of them as potential objects of visual perception. (I will take up this theme again section (1.3.2) below).

1.2.1 The Basic Perceptual Sense of 'See'

The verb 'see' is a massively polysemous verb (Gisborne (2010), p. 118). It has many different senses. In a corpus based study Alm-Arvius distinguishes nine different senses of 'see' (see her 1993), and Gisborne distin-

guishes yet more. Not every sense of ‘see’ is a perceptual sense. It is clear from the examples below that ‘see’ can mean, as Gisborne (p. 118) notes

in rough paraphrase, ‘perceive visually’, ‘understand’, ‘date’, and ‘escort’ among other senses.

- a. Jane saw the Taj Mahal.
- b. I see what you mean.
- c. Jen is seeing Brad.
- d. Kim saw the salesman to the door.

On the readings Gisborne highlights, (b), (c), and (d) involve non-perceptual senses of ‘see’—in contrast to (a). I’ll call the sense of ‘see’ involved in (a) the *basic perceptual sense* of ‘see’ (for, as we’ll see below, it is basic to our understanding of other senses of ‘see’). The following examples also involve ‘see’ in this sense:

- (4) I just saw Jane, she looked tired.
- (5) Jack saw Jane run.

In the basic perceptual sense ‘see’ means, roughly, *perceive visually*. It is part of the meaning of sentences of the form ‘S sees *x*’ which involve the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’ that uses of sentences of these forms get to be ascriptions of visual perception. A typical use of a sentence of the form ‘S sees *x*’ ascribes the visual perception of whatever is denoted by the term for ‘*x*’ to whatever is denoted by the term for ‘S’.

Given its meaning, ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense is subject to certain semantic selection restrictions. (A semantic selection restriction on a verb has to do with the semantic constraints there are on the verb’s arguments). For instance, the complement of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense must be a term which denotes a visible thing (e.g., a suitable concrete noun phrase, a small clause, or something like that). This semantic constraint on the complement of ‘see’ is satisfied in (4), for ‘Jane’ refers to Jane, and she is a visible entity. It is also satisfied in (5), for, arguably, the small clause ‘Jane run’ denotes an event—a running event of which Jane is the subject (see Higginbotham (1983), but c.f., Barwise (1981), and Neale (1988) for different approaches). And such events are visible entities too.

The semantic selection restriction we are considering imposes this condition: uses of ‘*S* sees *x*’, where ‘see’ is the basic perceptual ‘see’, can be true only where the term for ‘*x*’ denotes a visible entity. This property of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense reflects a fairly obvious material mode condition that we are committed to in our ordinary conception of visual perception: the objects of visual perception are visible entities. But the category of visible entities doesn’t form a ‘unified ontological category’ (Kalderon (2011a), p. 222). As Austin (1962b) notes, there is ‘no *one* kind of thing that we ‘perceive’ but many *different* kinds...’ (p. 4). We can see ordinary and familiar *objects* (material objects or bodies): ‘chairs, tables, pictures, books, flowers, pens, cigarettes (pp. 7–8)’. But also things like ‘rivers, mountains, flames, rainbows, shadows, pictures on a screen at the cinema, pictures in books or hung on walls...’ (p. 9). And as Dretske (1969) is keen to emphasize, we see *events*: ‘battles, departures, signals, ceremonies, games, accidents, stabbings, performances, escapes, and gestures’ (p. 14). We also see quantities of *stuff*: e.g., soup, snow, water, etc. And we often see scenes composed of entities of various different kinds. This is a very limited sampling of kinds whose members admit of things which are visible. We think we can see things of many different kinds—this is part of our ordinary conception of visual perception.

Do we have any pre-theoretic commitments about what it takes for a thing to be a visible thing? Consider the following example:

(6) ? I saw the number two.

If an utterance of (6) involves ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense, then to stand a chance of being true there has to be a reading of the complement expression: ‘the number two’, on which it denotes a visible entity. So there has to be a reading of the expression in the relevant context which is other than its default reading, which I’ll assume is one on which it is an abstract noun phrase which refers to an abstract object: the number two. We can, perhaps, understand an utterance of (6) and admit it as true in a context where ‘the number two’ refers to a child’s toy, which is “2-shaped”, that is, shaped like the numeral ‘2’. Suppose the child has a set of toys consisting of shapes corresponding to the numerals ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’, and ‘5’. Suppose *A* says “I’ve got all the toys but the numbers one and two”, and *B* replies by saying “I saw the number two in the drawer”.

I take it that we can understand *B*'s reply as a true use of (6), but only because we are understanding (6) in such a way that it satisfies the semantic selection restriction mentioned above. If *B*'s utterance of 'the number two' has its default reading, then not only will we struggle to understand the communicative exchange, but, on the assumption that numbers are imperceptible, *B*'s utterance will certainly be false—owing to the failure of the condition imposed by the selection restriction mentioned above.

Intuitively, I take it we regard numbers as imperceptible, and so as not among the things we can see. We do suppose that we can perceive *representations* of numbers (e.g., instances of the numeral '2', whether in child's toy form, written down, or some other form). But that is not the same as supposing that we can see the *numbers* represented by such representations. Moreover, we do suppose that we can see, say, two eggs. On some occasions it might be that in seeing two eggs, the fact that there are *two* eggs registers with one. But we wouldn't take this to add up to seeing the number two.

Furthermore, intuitively, numbers are not even *potential* objects of vision. That is, we don't think that we could see numbers if only there were a super form of laser eye surgery. Or if only we could build a powerful enough microscope or telescope. Or if only we could somehow remove whatever it is that occludes the numbers. Numbers, we take it, are just not the sorts of things that can be perceived, even in ideal perceptual circumstances. Numbers, then, are thus not even potential objects of visual perception. (At least, that is our ordinary view of the matter). Why do we think that numbers are inaccessible to vision?

One idea here is that we regard numbers, insofar as we take them to exist at all, as "abstract entities", and this is why we think they can't be seen. It strikes me that there is something right and intuitive about this line of thought, but it is too unspecific as it stands. Since it is not obvious what it means for something to be abstract, and so not obvious how to draw a meaningful distinction between abstract and concrete. But one idea that might underly the thought is that numbers, insofar as we conceive of them as things, are not conceived to be spatial things, and that is why we don't think we can see them. (A spatial thing, as I'm understanding the notion, is something which is in some sense in—e.g., exists in, occurs in, takes place in—public physical space). Intuitively, insofar as

we are willing to suppose that numbers exist, we don't suppose that they are located or locatable in space. The number eleven thus differs from the '11' sign on my front door. The door sign is *on* my door, it is *there* now. But the *number* eleven is placeless.

One suggestion, then, is that at least part of what underlies our pre-theoretic commitment to the idea that numbers are not potential objects of visual perception (and its manifestation in our ordinary talk), is that we don't regard them as spatial entities. We might suppose, then, that we are committed to the idea that only spatial entities can be objects of visual perception. (I am not claiming that non-spatiality is the *only* relevant factor underlying our commitment to the idea that numbers are inaccessible to vision—I mention another relevant factor below, and there are no doubt other relevant factors).

It seems plausible to suppose that, in our ordinary conception of visual perception, we tie being a potential object of visual perception to being a spatial entity. After all, entities which are clearly and paradigmatically potential objects of visual perception (such as those mentioned above) are spatial entities. Indeed the idea that seeing could relate us to a non-spatial entity is simply quite obscure—even if we think there are non-spatial entities.

The idea that potential objects of visual perception are spatial entities connects up with something which is bound to go into determining our ordinary conception of visual perception: the way in which ordinary visual perception strikes us. More specifically, visual perception strikes us as spatial in a way that makes sense of the idea that its objects must be spatial entities. This observation further supports the suggestion that we are committed to the idea that the objects of visual perception must be spatial. Let me elaborate on this.

As Strawson (1979) notes following Ayer (1973) we have a conception of the world 'as containing objects [more broadly, entities], variously propertied, located in a common space and continuing in their existence independently of our interrupted and relatively fleeting perceptions of them' (p. 94). And crucially, for our purposes here, we think that in visual perception we see aspects of the world so conceived, in the spaces they occupy (or obtain in, or take place in). As Strawson also says 'mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as, in Kantian phrase, an

immediate consciousness of the existence of things outside us [which is to say, in public mind-independent space]’ (p. 97).

I think Strawson’s remarks here get to the heart of some aspects of how we ordinarily think of visual perception. I think we can elaborate on part of what Strawson wants to convey as follows. Visual perception strikes us in this way: the things we see are present to us in a field of vision—a region of space—which we are aware of. Moreover, seeing strikes us as a state in which we take in, or are open to, what we regard as a region of space “out there”, populated by entities of various different sorts, spatially arrayed. So, insofar as we take visual perception to involve a field of vision, we don’t take it to be some private mind-dependent two-dimensional purely phenomenological space (which is how some sense-datum theorists think of it). We regard one’s field of vision at a time as simply a region of public space populated by mind-independent spatial entities. (For helpful discussion of the idea of the field of vision as a region of public space see Martin (1992), p. 199, and Richardson (2010)).

Here are three brief remarks which I take to provide *prima facie* support for the idea that insofar as we conceive of visual perception as involving a field of vision at a time, we conceive of that in terms of a public region of space which we are aware of at that time.

First, consider Jack and Jill sitting on a beach, next to each other, looking out to the sea. Because of their proximity we think that they are visually receptive to pretty much the same region of public space. That is, the space which constitutes Jack’s field of vision at t largely intersects with the space which constitutes Jill’s field of vision at t (though they are each aware of some regions of space that the other isn’t). If Jill turns her head, and Jack doesn’t, then Jack and Jill won’t have overlapping fields of vision. (The same is true if, say, Jack runs away, and Jill stays put). We regard Jack and Jill’s perceptual situation as one in which they are in a position to see various entities in regions of the public space they occupy and are visually open to. If a boat comes towards them they can both see *it*—the same boat—because it is located in a region of space which is common to their respective fields of vision. That we can straightforwardly make sense of this perceptual situation indicates that we regard such visual spaces—fields of vision or visual fields—as public spaces.

Second, suppose that in looking out to the sea Jill notices a crab on the sand, scuttling away. She moves out to capture the crab. Intuitively, we think that Jill moves through the very same space, or a region of the space, in which she saw the crab. The space in which she acts is (or at least includes) the space in which she initially caught sight of the crab—the space which partially constituted her field of vision when she saw the crab. Since our ordinary view is that we act in public physical space, this suggests that we also regard visual fields as constituted by such regions of space. (This, I take it, is part of what goes into our pre-theoretic understanding of how vision can guide action).

Third, we think of vision as one of the primary ways we have of knowing the locations of things. I know where—in public space—the lemon is right now. How? I can see where it is (e.g., relative to the books, or myself). It is visibly *there* on the desk, visibly *next to* the books, visibly *in front of me*, and so on. I look into my garden, there are two sheds at some distance in front of me. The green shed (to my left), and the blue shed (to my right). I see the sheds, and I know where they are as I can see where they are relative to each other and myself. (I am thus in a position to move towards either shed, in a purposeful and accurate way, guided by my vision). There are also (at least) two visible events happening in my garden. The cats are fighting, and the dogs are fighting. I know where each event is taking place, partly owing to what I can hear, but also because I can see where these events are taking place. (I can visually locate the events). The cats are fighting near the green shed, and the dogs are fighting near the blue shed. There is now a pool of blood in the middle of the garden—the dogs turned on the cats. I can see that too—some quantity of stuff. It too is a spatial entity. I know where it is (in the middle of the garden) because I can see it, where it is.

I take it that part of what goes into our pre-theoretic understanding of how we can have such visually based location knowledge—knowledge in which we know where things are in *public* space—is a conception of visual perception in which the spatial things we see are presented to us in a region of public space of which we are also aware (a region of space which functions as a field of vision).

We think that in visual perception, a thing is visible to one—seen by one—only insofar as it is an element of the public region of space which

constitutes one's field of vision. As Martin (1993) says

The field of vision delimits a region of space at a time within which one may visually experience objects [entities]; no object outside the field can be experienced without its either moving within the field, or the field itself being altered by moving one's gaze' (p. 215).

So it seems that on our ordinary conception of visual perception visible entities are spatial entities, since only spatial entities can be elements of public regions of space. A number cannot be in a region of public physical space—"out there". It thus can't be in one's field of vision at any time, as we ordinarily understand such fields. This is at least part of why we don't suppose that numbers can be seen—yet some representations of them can.

The use I've made of some quotes from Martin above is slightly misleading, since he takes it that visual perception involves a visual field in *normal* cases, but he is sceptical that this holds for vision in general (see, e.g., Martin (1992), p. 207). I think that our ordinary commitment to the idea that visual perception involves a field of vision is plausibly construed as a commitment about seeing entities in general. And I think that it is what underlies our commitment to the idea that we see only spatial entities. But I admit that the commitment comes from how normal cases of visual perception strike us. So, one might legitimately wonder whether the commitment withstands scrutiny in the light of "abnormal" cases of visual perception in which there are spatial perceptual deficits? (If it doesn't, one might then wonder whether I am right to claim that we are committed in the way I claim we are). But I think the commitment does withstand such scrutiny, but this is something I've argued for elsewhere, so I'll forgo discussing it further here (see French (Forthcoming), especially section 3.2 on Balint's Syndrome).

One may advance a theory of perception which states that we don't ever see such aspects of the world—at least, we don't "strictly speaking" see such aspects of the world. Some versions of the argument from illusion aim to deliver such a negative claim. The argument may then also be supplemented by a further positive claim to the effect that what we "really" see are sense-data, or Ideas. (For helpful discussion see Snowdon

(1992)). Whatever the philosophical merits of such arguments and the theories that go with them, they falsify our ordinary understanding of visual perception. (This is presumably part of why versions of the argument from illusion are seen as posing challenges worthy of philosophical scrutiny). Such views certainly don't sit comfortably with how visual perception strikes us when we reflect upon the visual experiences we have in visual perception. As Strawson notes, the most faithful descriptions of the character of the visual experiences normal perceivers have when seeing typically make reference to things (and their features) which we take to be aspects of the mind-independent spatiotemporal world. For instance, consider

a non-philosophical observer gazing idly through a window. To him we address the request, "Give us a description of your current visual experience," or "How is it with you, visually, at the moment?" Uncautioned as to exactly what we want, he might reply in some such terms as these: "I see the red light of the setting sun filtering through the black and thickly clustered branches of the elms; I see the dappled deer grazing in groups on the vivid green grass..." and so on (p. 93).

In giving such descriptions we reveal a commitment to the idea that we can see aspects of a mind-independent spatial world (given that we conceive of things such as red light, tree branches, groups of deer, and so on, as aspects of a mind-independent spatial world).

I take it that we don't suppose that being a spatial entity is a sufficient condition for being a potential object of visual perception. Consider smells or odours. As Batty (2010) notes

Although it generally goes unnoticed, we use 'smell' and 'odor' in both property-talk and object-talk, and interchangeably in each.... Just as we might speak of a flower as having a vibrant color, we might also speak of that flower as having a nice smell or a pleasant odor. In each case, it would seem, we attribute a property to the flower – a color in the visual case and what we call both a smell and an odor in the olfactory one. But we also use 'odor' and 'smell' to refer to objects. For example, we

say that things emit, or give off, odors. Similarly, we say that smells spread through space, that they drift from one region of space to another. The smell of paint might drift through the air, spreading throughout a building. When we say things like this, what we intend to convey is that some entity is moving through the atmosphere, or at least growing within it. It is standard practice amongst scientists to refer to these emanations as odors (p. 1138).

One thing that Batty highlights here is that there is an intelligible common-sense perspective on which smells or odours are objects of a certain sort, as opposed to properties (for the current purposes we don't need to worry about what sort of object a smell or odour is). On such a conception smells are located in space. The smell of the paint, that particular odour, is *in* the room. Admittedly, it occupies space differently to how the chair in the room does, it *fills* the room, and seeps out of the room if unobstructed. But can we *see* the particular odour emitted by the paint?

It sounds very odd to suppose that one might see a particular smell or odour. I take it that insofar as we are willing to conceive of smells as spatial entities, we don't suppose that they are among the visible spatial entities. We can see the paint which smells, but not the smell the paint emits. It is difficult to make sense of seeing a smell, just as it is difficult to make sense of seeing a number. But in this case it is not because we don't take smells to be spatial entities. We are supposing that they are. What might explain our commitment to the idea that smells are not potential objects of visual perception?

A plausible explanation for why we don't suppose that the smell of the paint can be seen is that we don't suppose that smells themselves can have looks. That is, we don't suppose that the particular smell coming from the paint looks any way at all. The ways things look ground the ways we take them to be visibly similar or different to other things, and these are notions that just don't apply to smells. It doesn't make sense to wonder whether the smell of the paint in the room is *visibly* similar or different to the smell of bacon in the next room—those smells don't look any ways, there is nothing to ground a judgement of visible similarity or difference.

They *smell* different, in some respects.

The paint in the tin, on the other hand, looks various ways. For instance, it has a crimson look, and looks like crimson paint (it also looks like crimson soup, but it has a visible thickness such that it doesn't look like crimson water). The painted wall looks various ways. For instance, it too looks crimson, and like a crimson wall. But also it looks various ways thanks to the textural properties it has: the bricks show through, so it has a bricky look to its surface, it is thus visibly different to a typical looking plaster boarded wall. The wall looks certain ways thanks to its extent (and other spatial properties it has). It is a vast wall, the room has a high ceiling, and this makes the wall look different to a wall in a small poky flat. The smell of the paint doesn't look any way at all. And this is at least part of why we don't count it as a visible entity.

Material things, quantities of stuff, things like shadows, rainbows, light, and so on are things we think can look some ways. We can specify the way such things look in *many* ways, but notably with reference to basic visible qualities such as colour, shape, texture, and so on. But what about events? Things are not as straightforward with events. Consider something that happened earlier today: the lemon on my desk rolled off the table. I witnessed this event. The way it looked wasn't determined by its *colour* or its *shape* or its *texture*. The event didn't have such qualities. But it still looked some way. The event in question was not a peculiar instance of its kind, it looked like events of *that kind* typically look (of course there are many ways in which a particular event can look to end up looking *that way*). The way the event looked grounds my judgement that it was visibly similar to an event that happened the day before, namely, the orange's rolling off the table. Though it was visibly very different from another thing that happened earlier, namely, my spilling lemon juice on the table. (A lemon rolling off a table doesn't usually look like lemon juice being spilled on the table—such events tend to look different).

Often the way the events we see look will be determined, at least in part, by the way their constituents look (and, more specifically, the way their constituents look in virtue of figuring in the events they figure in, in the way they do). Part of why the lemon's rolling off the table looked similar to the orange's rolling off the table is that the lemon in question and the orange in question looked similar, in terms of size and texture

(and the ways each piece of fruit moved—in terms of speed, and the angle at which they moved, and so—were visibly similar; this too added to the similarity in look of the events). But those two events didn't look *exactly* similar, I didn't *quite* have a sense of *déjà vu* when I witnessed the lemon's rolling off the table, and this is partly because the lemon looked different to the orange, in terms of shape and colour.

The particular event I've been considering is constituted by a change in, or something happening to, *a lemon*. The lemon is thus a constituent of the event, but also the subject, or substratum of the event. As Kalderon (2011a) notes, not all visible events are structured as such. For instance, the flash of lightening I saw in the storm last night—there was no lightening that flashed, just the flash of lightening (p. 222). The event looked some way to me. Such events, unlike the other events I've been considering, are, as Kalderon says 'unusual events'. Why? 'They are colored, but most events are not colored despite having colored participants' (p. 222). The flash of lightening I saw looked some way partly in virtue of its colour. It had a bright white colour, and thus looked different to the flash of (blue) light I witnessed when I saw the ambulance whizz by.

Particular events which count as visible look some ways. And some events look some ways partly in virtue of the constituents they have and the ways their constituents look. Others just look some ways. Smells, and numbers, don't look any ways at all, nor do they have constituents which look some ways. Our appreciation of this is part of why we don't suppose that smells and numbers are potential objects of visual perception. (The considerations I have considered with the example of smells, I take it, could be run with sounds too, considered as spatial entities of some sort, see O'Callaghan (2007)).

A further suggestion, then, is that we pre-theoretically suppose that a spatial entity must look some way or ways if it is to count as a *potential* object of visual perception. This is presumably because when an entity is *actually* seen, it thereby looks some way *to one*. It is hard to make sense of entities which don't themselves look some way looking some way to a subject. (There is more on the idea that seeing *x* requires *x* to look some way or ways *to one* in section (1.3.3) below).

On the basis of this discussion I take it that the semantic selec-

tion restriction governing ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense can be cashed out by observing that it imposes this condition: uses of ‘*S* sees *x*’, where ‘see’ is the basic perceptual ‘see’, can be true only where the term for ‘*x*’ denotes a visible entity, an entity which is spatial and has looks. And the relevant condition in the material mode that we are committed to in our ordinary conception of visual perception is thus: the objects of visual perception are visible entities, they are thus entities which are spatial and which have looks. There may be more that goes into an entity being a potential object of visual perception. But it seems that we pre-theoretically take an entity’s being spatial and having looks as central to its visibility.

Unsurprisingly, given its meaning, some of the properties of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense manifest some aspects of our ordinary conception of visual perception. We have encountered this in the selection restriction we have been considering. There are various other examples in the discussion below of how aspects of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense manifest aspects of our ordinary conception of visual perception. But the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’ is not the only perceptual sense of ‘see’. There is a further perceptual sense of ‘see’ relevant to us here. This further sense of ‘see’ is an epistemic sense, so I’ll call it the *epistemic perceptual sense*. To understand this sense it helps first to understand how ‘see’ also has a *non-perceptual* epistemic sense—what I’ll call the *purely epistemic sense*.

1.2.2 The Epistemic Senses of ‘See’

Let’s consider first the sense of ‘see’ present in the following examples:

- (7) Matt spoke carefully, picking his words in such a way that Piet saw that he was no friend; one did not have to speak so carefully to friends (adapted from Alm-Arvius (1993), p. 265).
- (8) They argued about it, but in the end Jane saw that Peter was right (adapted from Gisborne (2010), p. 122)
- (9) I can see that Jane’s argument is valid.

It is clear that ‘see’ as it occurs in these examples is not the basic perceptual ‘see’. It doesn’t mean: *perceive visually*. In these constructions ‘see’

doesn't have a perceptual meaning at all. (7)–(9) could all be true of an individual who was blind. In these examples 'see' seems to have more of a cognitive meaning. But how are we to understand this cognitive meaning further?

In these examples 'see' is like 'believes' or 'thinks' on propositional readings of those verbs: it ascribes a propositional attitude. But in these constructions 'see' doesn't *just* mean *believes* or *thinks*, since it picks out a *factive* attitude. Believing that *p*, and thinking that *p* aren't factive attitudes, since a factive attitude is an attitude one can have only to truths, and one can believe, or think, that *p* when *p* is not true.

Furthermore, paraphrase data reveals that there is more to the meaning of 'see' in these constructions than merely *believes* and *thinks*. Rather, 'see' in these constructions is closely connected in meaning to the meaning of 'know' on its propositional reading:

- (7)' Matt spoke carefully, picking his words in such a way that Piet saw [realized, understood] that he was no friend; one did not have to speak so carefully to friends.
- (8)' They argued about it, but in the end Jane saw [knew, realized] that Peter was right.
- (9)' I can see [I know, realize, understand] that Jane's argument is valid.

The appropriateness of the rough paraphrases included in the brackets above reveals that in these examples 'see' means something like *understand* or *realize*, or *know*. As such, uses of 'see' in this sense ascribe knowledge that *p* or a state which entails such knowledge to *S* (where *p* is the proposition expressed by the relevant THAT clause). As noted above, I'll call the sense of 'see' which these examples exemplify the *purely epistemic sense*.

We now need to understand the sense of 'see' suggested in the following examples:

- (10) She was pale the next day and he could see that she had not slept. (Alm-Arvius (1993), p. 73)
- (11) I see from your news pages that the feature films and past TV shows will soon be on the market for owners of video cassette recorders (Gisborne (2010), p. 120).

(12) I see by the angle of the sun that the morning is almost ended (Gisborne, p. 120).

(13) I see that Jack is wearing his pink sweater again, it looks horrible.

How should we think of ‘see’ as it occurs in these examples (on their most natural readings)? Is the sense of ‘see’ in these examples the basic perceptual sense? For despite being similar in structure to the examples which suggest the purely epistemic sense, these examples, unlike those other examples, *do* suggest a meaning of ‘see’ associated with visual perception. We would most naturally take a use of (13), for instance, to be, in part at least, a report on what one can see with their eyes. However, as Gisborne (2010) argues, the linguistic evidence supports the claim that (10)–(13) *don’t* involve the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’ (this *doesn’t* mean that it is not a *perceptual* sense, just that if it is, it is a distinct perceptual sense from the basic perceptual sense). Gisborne reasons as follows:

One way of diagnosing polysemy is to exploit evidence from selection restrictions, and the referents of THAT clauses belong in a different ontological class from things and events. [...] There is a real difference between the examples [in (4)–(5) which involve the basic perceptual sense] and the other examples in [(10)–(13)]: the semantics of the THAT clausal complement are different from the semantics of the complements in [the basic perceptual examples]. A THAT clausal complement denotes a proposition—it is timeless and placeless. [The complements in, say, (4) and (5)] refer to a thing and an event respectively, and things and events both have a time and a place, which means that they can both be physically perceived. The contents of a THAT clause cannot be physically perceived, because they are not physical. It is reasonable, therefore, to argue that although [the basic perceptual examples] can be treated together because they both involve the physical perception sense, the examples in [(10)–(13)] express a separate sense which has the same selection restrictions as the sense in [(7)–(9), the purely epistemic sense] (p. 120).

I think we can capture Gisborne's line of reasoning here in the following way. As noted above, given what 'see' means in the basic perceptual sense, it is subject to the following selection restriction: its complement expression must be a term which denotes a *spatial* thing. But 'see' as it occurs in (10)–(13) doesn't satisfy this semantic constraint. In these constructions the complements of 'see' are THAT clauses. And the semantic values of such clauses, when they complement propositional attitude verbs, are not in space—they are rather propositions which can also serve as the contents knowledge, thought, belief, and other attitudes. This is evidence that 'see' in these examples is not the basic perceptual 'see'.

That such contents are not visible is something Frege pointed out when he noted that '[t]hat the sun has risen is not an object emitting rays that reach my eyes; it is not a visible thing like the sun itself' (Frege (1918), p. 328). And Frege's point is worked out in detail by Travis (2007), I want to consider this briefly now.

Consider the fact or proposition *that there is meat on the rug*. Now in one sense this fact is visible. Just in the sense that one can tell by vision that the meat is indeed on the rug. That is, some propositions or facts can be known to obtain by visual means, and in that sense we might legitimately think of them as visible. But are such propositions visible in the sense in which a material object (the meat), or collection of such objects (some joints of meat), an event (the cutting of the meat), a quantity of stuff (the blood drained from the meat), and so on, are visible? Can such facts be seen in the sense in which the entities they concern can be seen? Travis expresses doubts about the idea in the following passage:

The meat is *in* the surroundings. To see it, look where it is. Look there, too, to see the condition it is in. You can watch the meat—watch it change (in condition or position), watch *for* changes. To see that the meat is on the rug, you *might* look where the *meat* is. You might also look elsewhere—in Pia's face, say (the horrified look). You cannot look 'where that the meat is on the rug is'. There is no such place. You cannot *watch* that the meat is on the rug, nor watch for, nor see, changes in it. It is not eligible for such changes. (You can watch only what you can look for changes in.) Vision af-

fords sensitivity to the goings on in one's surroundings, and to what undergoes them. What one is *thus* sensitive to is not that such-and-such is so. One's visual sensitivity to what is going on may gain one sensitivity to things being thus and so. Such depends on your sensitivities to things before you being, or not, particular ways they may be [i.e., recognitional capacities] (p. 238).

We can capture some of what Travis is driving at here in terms of the idea that insofar as we regard a particular piece of meat as an object of visual perception, we expect it to be (a) something one can look at (e.g., I looked at the meat when I thought I saw it move); (b) something one can visually locate, and so something which has a visible spatial location (e.g., I see where the dog has placed the meat after he stole it from my plate); (c) something which one can visually track (e.g., I keep sight of the meat as the dog drags it out of the room); (d) something one can watch (e.g., I watched the meat shrink in the pan). These expectations naturally flow from our regarding the meat as visible. So if we are going to regard *that the meat is on the rug* as visible *in the same way*, we would expect that fact or proposition to be something we can look at, locate, watch, etc. But such notions don't apply to the fact. This throws doubt on the idea that we can intelligibly regard it as visible in the way that the meat is.

What underlies Travis's point here is what we noted earlier. That we take there to be a link between a thing's being visible (where that means, a potential object of vision) and it's being spatial. That facts or propositions are not spatial is what prevents them from being visible, and so what prevents them from being things we can look at, locate, watch, and so on. Travis also says

But if seeing that were seeing an item visible as meat is, one could say: 'Sid saw *that there was meat on the rug*, though clueless as to what it was he saw', 'Sid saw that there was meat on the rug, but mistook it for that the Lexus was in the garage'; and if Sid were asked 'What are *you* looking at?', an intelligible (though perhaps not advisable) response would be: 'I haven't the faintest idea. Perhaps it's that there's red meat on the rug. But it may be that I have been driving'. Such things make no

sense. Reason to be wary of the idea that ‘perceptual intake’ is, *per se*, conceptually structured...(p. 233).

The idea, I take it, is that we typically regard objects as things one can see but mistake for other things (e.g., one might see the meat on the rug but mistake it for a rubber dog toy in the shape of a piece of meat). So, once more, if we were to try to model the visibility of *that the meat is on the rug* in terms of the visibility of the meat on the rug, we should expect to be able to see the proposition, yet mistake it for another proposition. But this, Travis urges, doesn’t appear to make sense. So once more, we should be sceptical of the idea that such propositions are visible in the way that pieces of meat and other sorts of entity are visible.

Moreover, as noted above, insofar as we regard a piece of meat as an object of visual perception, we regard it as something which can have looks (look some way), and as something which can look some way to one. For instance, the meat I am having for dinner looks just like the rubber meat-like toy I got for my dog. And it looks like that to me. But what does *that the meat is on the rug* look like? How might it look to one? Surely the notions of ‘looking like’ and ‘looking some way to one’ just don’t apply here. It thus doesn’t seem plausible to suppose that *that the meat is on the rug* is a potential object of visual perception.

For these reasons, I am going to take it that THAT clauses, at least as they occur as the complements of propositional attitude verbs, do not denote potential objects of visual perception. But since we think that utterances of sentences like (10)–(13) can be true, this means that they can’t involve the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’.

It seems right to say that ‘see’ in (10)–(13) is not the basic perceptual ‘see’, it doesn’t simply mean: *perceive visually*. So, should we treat ‘see’ in these constructions as just the purely epistemic sense? After all, as Gisborne notes, in these constructions ‘see’ has the same selection restrictions as it does in the purely epistemic sense (in (10)–(13) ‘see’ takes a THAT clausal complement, as it does in the purely epistemic sense). Also in (10)–(13) ‘see’ is, like the purely epistemic ‘see’, factive.

But despite these similarities, Gisborne (2010, p. 146) argues that there are ‘linguistic ways of differentiating’ examples which exhibit the purely epistemic sense, and the examples in (10)–(13). This suggests that

we have distinct senses here. Gisborne presents evidence for this in the form of the following examples (my numbering):

(14) Jane saw through the window that Peter had crossed safely.

(15) ! Jane saw through the window that Peter was right.

From these examples we can appreciate that some occurrences of ‘see’ in propositional contexts can be embellished with certain prepositions (such as ‘through the window’), yet some can’t—the occurrence in (14) is fine, yet (15) is infelicitous. The question is, why is there this difference in felicity? Gisborne’s answer is that there are distinct senses of ‘see’ within the class of occurrences of ‘see’ in propositional contexts. If the sense of ‘see’ was the same in both cases, we shouldn’t get these differences in felicity—that is, given sameness of sense, then if (14) sounds fine then (15) should too, and if (15) sounds odd, then (14) should too. So there is clear evidence that there are distinct senses of ‘see’ within the class of occurrences of ‘see’ in propositional contexts.

These examples also help to support the idea that there is a visual perceptual dimension to ‘see’ in some occurrences of ‘see’ in propositional contexts. Visual perception is directional, it involves looking in a certain direction (for creatures like us and other animals, it involves one’s eyes pointing in a certain direction). Unsurprisingly then, when we attribute visual perception to a subject, we can embellish such attributions by representing the direction of the subject’s gaze. When we use ‘see’ in its basic perceptual sense we can do this. For instance we can say things like: “I was looking through the window and I saw him cross the road” and “I saw the bird through my binoculars”. (14) doesn’t involve the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’ yet it is an occurrence of ‘see’ which can also be embellished by representing a gaze, or direction of looking. The fact that some propositional occurrences of ‘see’ can be embellished with *such* directional phrases is evidence that those occurrences are *like* the basic perceptual ‘see’ in having a perceptual aspect to their meaning.

And from this we can bolster the idea that some occurrences of ‘see’ in propositional contexts are not visual perceptual at all, but purely epistemic. Namely, those occurrences which just don’t admit of embellishment with directional phrases (such as in (15)). We can

explain why (15) is infelicitous, since ‘see’ in such occurrences has a purely epistemic sense—it doesn’t make sense to think that mere knowing or understanding requires a visual perspective or point of view from which one directs a gaze.

The linguistic evidence we have considered so far suggests, then, that in addition to the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’ there are two distinct propositional senses of ‘see’: there is the purely epistemic sense (which we encountered in examples (7)–(9)), but also a distinct sense suggested by examples (10)–(13) and (14). This latter sense is not the basic perceptual ‘see’, but it is similar in that it has a perceptual dimension to its meaning. According to Gisborne, ‘see’ in this further sense combines elements of the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’, *and* the purely epistemic sense of ‘see’ (p. 146). One thing we haven’t yet made explicit is that ‘see’ in this further sense is not just similar to ‘see’ in the purely epistemic sense in virtue of having the same selection restrictions, and being factive. It is similar too in that it is *epistemic*. That is, sentences of the form ‘*S* sees that *p*’, where ‘see’ has the epistemic perceptual sense, represent their subjects as *knowledgeable*—that is, as either knowing that *p*, or as being in a state, such as noticing that *p*, realizing that *p*, understanding that *p*, recognizing that *p*, and so on, which entails knowledge that *p*. Thus, as noted above, I’ll call this latter sense of ‘see’ the *epistemic perceptual sense*. That this sense of ‘see’ is epistemic in this way is supported by the paraphrase data. Consider the following rough paraphrases of (10)–(13):

(10)’ She was pale the next day and he could see [tell by looking] that she had not slept. (Alm-Arvius (1993), p. 73)

(11)’ I see [understand, know, notice, realize] from [what I see in] your news pages that the feature films and past TV shows will soon be on the market for owners of video cassette recorders (Gisborne (2010), p. 120).

(12)’ I see by the angle of the sun [I can tell by looking at the angle of the sun] that the morning is almost ended (Gisborne, p. 120).

(13)’ I see [notice by sight] that Jack is wearing his pink sweater again, it looks horrible.

The appropriateness of these paraphrases indicates that like the purely epistemic ‘see’, ‘see’ in (10)–(13) has an *epistemic* meaning—uses of ‘see’ in this sense ascribe knowledge or a state which entails knowledge.

To be clear, then, we have been discussing three senses of ‘see’:

See₁ The basic perceptual sense (e.g., ‘I saw Jane, she looked tired’).

See₂ The purely epistemic sense (e.g., ‘They argued about it, but in the end Jane saw that Peter was right’).

See₃ The epistemic perceptual sense (e.g., ‘I see that Jack is wearing his pink sweater again, it looks horrible’).

The selection restrictions on the basic perceptual ‘see’ include the constraint that its complement expression denotes a visible entity. This is not so of ‘see’ in the other senses. In both the purely epistemic and epistemic perceptual sense, ‘see’ takes a THAT clausal complement, and the semantic values of such clauses are not visible (in the relevant sense). In both epistemic senses ‘see’ functions as a factive mental state operator. In the purely epistemic sense sentences of the form ‘S sees that *p*’ represents *S* as knowledgeable with respect to *p*. This is also true of ‘see’ in the epistemic perceptual sense, but ‘see’ in that sense also has a *perceptual* dimension to its meaning.

I now want to ask how we are to understand the epistemic perceptual sense of ‘see’ further, and how it involves a combination of elements of the purely epistemic and basic perceptual senses?

From the above paraphrases of (10)–(13) we can appreciate that the epistemic dimension to the meaning of ‘see’ in these constructions isn’t *pure*. Sentences of the form ‘S sees (can see) that *p*’ which involve the perceptual epistemic sense of ‘see’ represent *S* as *knowledgeable* with respect to *p on the basis of vision*. That is, ‘see’ attributes knowledge (or a state which entails knowledge) in (10)–(13), but it doesn’t *just* attribute that. Rather in (10)–(13) the meaning of ‘see’ is such that paradigmatic uses of those sentences ascribe knowledge (or a knowledge entailing state), but also such uses state that the knowledge is *visually based*. (In this way ‘see’ in the epistemic perceptual sense is an *evidential* verb, just in that it indicates the *source* of the information in the THAT clause).

Clearly, then, it is part of the meaning of 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense that uses of sentences of the form '*S* sees that *p*', with 'see' in that sense, are knowledge ascriptions (or ascriptions which ascribe knowledge entailing states). But they are also, in a sense, ascriptions of visual perception. This is how the epistemic perceptual sense is similar to the basic perceptual sense. But we need to be careful with this last point. For there are two important differences between the way in which uses of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense ascribe visual perception, and the way in which uses of 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense ascribe visual perception. I will discuss these differences now.

The first difference pertains to something we have already considered. Namely, the fact that there is more to 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense than its perceptual dimension. The way in which this is so, I want to suggest, is part of what distinguishes uses of 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense from uses of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense insofar as both sorts of uses count as ascriptions of visual perception.

Some verbs have a meaning which is particularly well suited to the ascription of visual perception. Obviously 'see' in the basic perceptual sense is one such verb. Uses of sentences of the form '*S* sees *x*' where 'see' has the basic perceptual sense, ascribe visual perception in what we can call a *pure* way. That is, insofar as 'sees *x*' in such uses ascribes visual perception it doesn't do so in virtue of, or by being part of, ascribing something which is not itself visual perception. But other verbs, which like 'see' in the basic perceptual sense have a meaning which makes them particularly well suited to ascribing visual perception, can ascribe visual perception in a non-pure way. That is, there are some such verbs which ascribe visual perception in virtue of, or by being part of, ascribing something which is not itself visual perception. Here are some examples:

(16) He gazed at the night sky.

(17) She looked at the painting carefully.

(18) Jane watched the car crash into the wall.

(19) John spent most of the evening staring into space.

The term 'gaze', with the sense suggested by its occurrence in (16), is a verb of visual perception insofar as *gazing at* something is an exercise of a

visual capacity. To gaze at the night sky is (in part) to direct one's visual attention towards the night sky in a certain way, and it involves seeing the night sky. So although 'gaze' clearly doesn't just mean *perceive visually* it still has a meaning which is such that uses of it, in a way, ascribe visual perception. Similar things can be said of 'look', 'watch', and 'stare' (given the readings suggested by the linguistic contexts above). None of these verbs (in the intended senses) simply means *perceive visually*. Yet uses of them, in a way, ascribe visual perception. To look at something is to engage with it visually, in a certain way (and this involves seeing it). Watching something happening is a sort of visual activity which involves seeing a happening or event (e.g., watching a car crash involves seeing the car crash). And staring also involves seeing (you can't stare at something or into some space with your eyes closed). Obviously there is much more to be said about such verbs and the visual activities they denote, but the basic point is just that these verbs (and many others) are in some sense verbs of visual perception—uses of them in some sense ascribe visual perception—even though they don't simply mean *perceive visually*.

Uses of (16)–(19) are, in a sense, ascriptions of visual perception, but, for the reasons given above, they are not *pure* ascriptions of visual perception. That is, they ascribe visual perception only because of the constitutive connection between visual perception and the visual activities or exercises of visual capacities that they ascribe. There is more to what uses of such sentences ascribe than just visual perception, and their main function (or at least an important function they have) is to ascribe something which is not visual perception.

With respect to being ascriptions of visual perception uses of sentences of the form 'S sees that *p*' where 'see' has the epistemic perceptual sense are somewhat like uses of (16)–(19). They ascribe visual perception *as the source of the knowledge* which they ascribe. There is more to what uses of such sentences ascribe than just visual perception, and their main function (or at least an important function they have) is to ascribe something which is not visual perception, namely knowledge or a state in which *S* is knowledgeable (a knowledge entailing state).

There is a further way in which uses of sentences of the form 'S sees that *p*', which involve the epistemic perceptual sense of 'see', differ as ascriptions of visual perception from uses of sentences of the form 'S

sees x ', which involve the basic perceptual sense of 'see'. This further way is also a way in which uses of sentences involving 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense differ, *qua* ascriptions of visual perception, from uses of sentences such as those in (16)–(19). To illustrate this, consider the following examples, one of which we have already encountered:

(4) I just saw Jane, she looked tired.

(20) I stared at Jane.

It is part of the meaning of (4) that a use of it ascribes to the speaker a state of visual perception of a specific type. Namely, one which has *Jane* as its object. That is, the state type (sees *Jane*) is specified as part of the meaning of the sentence. The same is true of (20) (though of course, as discussed above, a use of (20) isn't a *pure* ascription of visual perception). But now consider the following example:

(21) I can see that Jane is tired.

Suppose that (21) involves the epistemic perceptual sense of 'see'. I have been suggesting that it is part of the meaning of such sentences (specifically, the perceptual dimension of their meaning) that uses of such sentences ascribe visual perception. However, it is *not* part of the meaning of such sentences that there is a specification of a visual perceptual state type. This is the further way in which uses of such sentences and uses of sentences such as (16)–(19) differ with respect to being ascriptions of visual perception. Let me illustrate this point.

What a use of (21) says then is something like: I [the speaker] can tell by sight that Jane is tired. Insofar as such a use ascribes to the speaker a state of visual perception as the basis for the ascribed knowledge (or knowledge entailing state), there is no specification of the type of state of visual perception. Given what 'see' means in the epistemic perceptual sense, part of what uses of '*S* sees that *p*' say is: there is some state or episode of visual perception v , of which *S* is the subject, and which is such that *S* knows that *p* on the basis of v . (The ascription of visual perception comes thanks to the quantificational content). Which type of visual perceptual state v is doesn't enter into the semantic content of the sentence type. This chimes well with the idea that an utterance involving

(21) could be true thanks to any of the following states of affairs (indicated in italics):

- I can tell that Jane is tired because *I can see the tired look in her eyes*
- I can tell that Jane is tired because *I can see her slouching around*
- I can tell that Jane is tired because *I can see her yawning*
- I can tell that Jane is tired because *I can see her nodding off*
- I could tell that Jane was tired because *I saw her*

And so on...

In a conversational context in which one utters (21) it may be quite obvious what the *specific* visual basis for the knowledge is—which specific type of state of visual perception is in play. But it is not part of the meaning of ‘see’ in the epistemic perceptual sense that such information is communicated.

On this view we can still respect Dretske’s distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ epistemic seeing (see Dretske (1969)). A case of primary epistemic seeing would be a case where I see that Jane is tired by seeing Jane herself. What then counts as a case of ‘secondary’ epistemic seeing? Dretske gives the following examples, and explains the distinction in the following passage:

One can see (by the newspapers) that the President is ill; one can see (by the gauge) that the battery is discharging, see (by her note) that she has gone shopping, and so on. At least we say such things, and it is fairly clear that we say them with a full realization that the President, the battery, and the person are not (or need not) themselves be seen. I can see that someone has been trampling on my daffodils without seeing anyone....I shall refer to such cases as instances of seeing that *b* is *P* in a *secondary* epistemic way..The terms ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ are being used merely to contrast two different situations: the cases where we see that *b* is *P* *by seeing b itself*, and cases where we see that *b* is *P* *without seeing b* (pp. 79–80).

(The way of explaining the distinction which occurs at the end of this passage is something Dretske qualifies in later passages, but such niceties are not relevant to the point I'm about to make). I don't wish to deny that there are these different categories of epistemic seeing. It seems quite useful to carve up cases in this way. What I mean to deny is that it is semantically encoded (and as far as I am aware this is not to disagree with anything Dretske says). That is, we don't have distinct epistemic perceptual *senses* of 'see' which mark this distinction. It is not part of the *semantic* content of 'I see that the President is ill' that the state ascribed falls into either the primary or secondary category. This is because there is no specification, in the semantic content of such sentence types, which gives the specific type of visual state (e.g., seeing the President, or seeing the newspapers, or seeing the television broadcast, and so on) which would ground a classification of the state as either primary or secondary epistemic seeing.

To summarize our discussion of 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense, we can recall the following points. It is part of the meaning of 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense that it is both epistemic and perceptual. (It is thus similar to the purely epistemic sense and similar to the basic perceptual sense). It is epistemic in that sentences of the form 'S sees that *p*' represent *S* as *knowledgeable*, with respect to *p*. It is perceptual in that such sentences say of *S* that *there is some state of visual perception, v*, of *S*'s, which is such that *S* knows that *p* (or is in a state which entails such knowledge) on the basis of *v*. (Thus, 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense is evidential in that it indicates the source of the information specified in the THAT clause, and more specifically, indicates that it is *visual*). Sentences of the form 'S sees that *p*' which involve 'see' in the epistemic perceptual sense have a meaning which is such that uses of them ascribe visual perception (thing seeing). But such ascriptions of visual perception are not pure. And it is not part of the meaning of such ascriptions of visual perception to include a specification of the type of state of visual perception which is ascribed. Thinking of the epistemic perceptual sense of 'see' in this way is consistent with drawing a distinction between primary and epistemic seeing, but we have to appreciate that this distinction isn't semantically marked.

Summary

In this Chapter so far I have been discussing visual perceptual vocabulary. I have isolated and discussed two perceptual senses of ‘see’—the basic perceptual sense and the epistemic perceptual sense. I have also discussed what we pre-theoretically take to be required for a thing to count as a potential object of visual perception. Having some of these details in hand will, I hope, aid us in understanding various further aspects of our ordinary conception of visual perception. I will now discuss further our ordinary conception of visual perception (thing seeing). I will refer to properties of ‘see’ where appropriate—where it will help in elucidating a relevant aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception, or where I think it is worth making a further point about ‘see’ in either of the perceptual senses I’ve discussed.

1.3 Visual Perception

1.3.1 Visual Perception as Relational

As we ordinarily think of it seeing is a relation of a subject to an entity. We think that S ’s seeing an entity x is a relational state of affairs. Accordingly, S ’s seeing x , we think, requires the existence of both S and x . The idea that if S sees x , x must exist, I’ll call the *existence condition*. I take it that if seeing is relational it must be subject to the existence condition. For I am assuming the principle that if a relation between x and y obtains, then x and y must exist. Thus, when I talk about the relational nature of seeing, I will take it as understood that this comes with the existence condition packed into it. (It is perhaps worth noting that the principle I’ve just invoked is not entirely uncontroversial. A Meinongian will deny it. A Meinongian can say that relations entail their relata, but that is not the same as the claim that their relata must *exist* if the relation obtains. They might hold that there are some relations, R , which are such that the obtaining of xRy is consistent with x and/or y being “nonexistent” objects. That as it may be, I take it that on our ordinary conception, seeing is relational in a sense which entails the existence condition).

So, on our ordinary conception, if S sees x , there is an x which S sees.

One cannot genuinely *see* a pig before one if there is no pig there which one sees. One cannot see snow on the ground if there is no snow there to be seen. One cannot see the ceremony if there is no ceremony taking place. And so on.

In taking seeing to be relational in this way we think of seeing as like *standing next to*, or *kicking*, or *touching*, but unlike *imagining*, or *desiring*, or *searching for*. That is, one cannot stand next to a lamppost if there is no lamppost there to stand next to. One cannot kick a ball if there is no ball there to kick. And one thing cannot touch—be in contact with—another thing unless both things exist. But, as Dretske notes, one can ‘desire a speckled poodle without there being any speckled poodles’ (Dretske (1969), pp. 43–44). And one can search for, or imagine, speckled poodles even when no such things exist (for other examples see Anscombe (1965), pp. 160–161).

The fact that we think of seeing as being relational in this way is manifest in our use of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense. Uses of sentences of the form ‘*S* sees *x*’ where ‘see’ has its basic perceptual sense attribute a relation—visual perception, or seeing—between whatever is denoted by the subject expression and whatever is denoted by the complement expression. Accordingly, sentences of the form ‘*S* sees *x*’, where ‘see’ has its basic perceptual sense have what Armstrong (1968) calls an ‘existence-grammar’ (p. 215). That is, from ‘*S* sees *x*’ we can validly infer ‘*x* exists’ (or ‘there is an *x* which *S* sees’).

In some of the literature the existence-grammar of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense is sometimes couched in terms of ‘see’ being subject to a *veridicality* condition (see Barwise (1981)). I’ll avoid this terminology, given how the notion of veridicality is used in current philosophy of perception. We think, that is, that ‘*S* sees *x*’ can be true of some *S* even when their perception of *x* is non-veridical. For instance, consider the familiar Müller-Lyer illusion. Suppose that *S* sees two lines, identical in length. An ascription of the form ‘*S* sees those lines’ is true of our *S*, thus ‘those lines exist’ is also true. Yet, consistently with this, *S* may be subject to the illusion. If *S* is subject to the illusion then *S* won’t see the lines for what they are—identical in length. *S* will see them as being of different lengths. And so *S*’s perception of the lines will be *non-veridical*. Thus it is potentially misleading to say that ‘see’ is subject to a veridicality condi-

tion. It is better to say that 'see' has an existence-grammar, or is subject to an existence condition.

It should be noted that there are felicitous or appropriate uses of sentences of the form 'S sees x' which don't obey the aforementioned existence condition. For instance, consider the following examples discussed by Alm-Arvius (1993) (my numbering):

(22) The door hit me in the face and I saw stars for a moment (p. 142).

(23) I've only had six whiskies and already I'm seeing pink elephants (p. 145).

For further examples see also Anscombe (1965), pp. 169–170. One can felicitously utter (22) when there are no stars there for one to clap one's eyes upon, and (23) when there are no pink elephants in view. Do these examples show that 'see' in the basic perceptual sense doesn't necessarily have an existence-grammar? Or that there is some other perceptual sense of 'see' which doesn't have an existence-grammar?

This is by no means obvious. Plausibly, in these examples, 'see' is used in the basic perceptual sense, but not in a straightforward way. It seems that in these examples the basic perceptual 'see' is subject to pragmatic restriction (see here Alm-Arvius (1993), p. 141). That is, these are examples of uses of 'see' which 'tell us about processes which seem in most respects quite similar to those represented by the regular [basic perceptual uses of 'see'], although they do not involve all the characteristics that can be associated with the standard content of this pattern [that is, with the standard semantics for 'see' in the basic perceptual sense]' (p. 141).

This sort of approach to these examples is also endorsed by Dretske (1969), consider the following:

Some philosophers become very puzzled when other people poke their fingers in their eyes and 'see two pencils instead of one'. The conclusion they draw from this is that there is a sense of the verb 'to see' in which one can see two pencils when there is only one (real) pencil, hence, a sense of the verb which is not governed by the existence condition. Somehow it never occurs to them that a person behaving in this unusual

fashion is as significant for what he is saying as is the fact that the person uttered the words 'It seems as though' before his perceptual claim. But both pieces of behavior, the one linguistic, the other non-linguistic, function in precisely the same way with respect to the words 'I see two pencils': they suspend the existence condition on the verb 'to see' in order to exploit the residual meaning of this verb to describe their visual experience.

In general, one can use the verb 'to see' without satisfying the existence condition as long as, and only so long as, one makes it clear to one's listeners, by some conventional device, linguistic or otherwise, that you, the speaker, acknowledge its suspension. (p. 48)

Uses of the above sentences (and Dretske's 'I see two pencils') report on visual goings on which are similar in some respects to instances of seeing proper. This is part of what makes it appropriate to use the term 'see' (in the basic perceptual sense) to describe them. But we interpret such uses of 'see' in such a way as to leave out some characteristics of its meaning (e.g., the existence-grammar aspect). This restriction, what Dretske calls the 'suspension of the existence condition', is pragmatically triggered, either by some linguistic device (e.g., prefixing the sentence with 'it seems to me as though' or 'it is as if' or some such expression), or by some feature of the extra-linguistic context.

Given that we interpret such uses in this restricted way, in uttering such sentences one can convey accurate information about how things are in one's visual consciousness—the visual sensations one is subject to—without being taken to be commenting on what one claps one's eyes upon. In a given context where it is clear that 'see' is subject to such pragmatic restriction, such utterances can be appropriate. None of this requires that existence-grammar or an existence condition isn't part of the meaning of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense, or that there is some other perceptual sense of 'see' which isn't governed by an existence-condition. (For further discussion see also Austin (1962b), Lecture IX).

In taking it that visual perception is relational in the way discussed we

are not thereby committing to any particular understanding of how that relational structure gets realized in instances of seeing—that is a more theoretical matter. We need to distinguish between our ordinary commitments on the nature of seeing, and more theoretical commitments. Burge (2010) seems to run these things together in the following passage:

The standard specification of such states [seeing, knowing, remembering, etc] *entails*—as a matter of the most elementary and superficial understanding—truth, veridicality, or some relation, such as perceptual reference, to the environment. Knowing something entails that it is true. Seeing something entails perceptually referring to it and being causally related to it (p. 62, fn. 1).

The ordinary commitment—what is part of the ‘most elementary and superficial understanding’ of seeing—is, as I’ve been saying, that seeing is relational (*S*’s seeing *x* is a relational state of affairs which requires the existence of both *S* and *x*). But it is a *theoretical* commitment to construe this, or embellish this, in terms of *reference* and/or *causation*. Seeing something may require ‘perceptually referring to it and being causally related to it’ but this doesn’t flow from our commitment to the relational nature of seeing.

For Burge reference is a type of representation (p. 31). If seeing *x* entails perceptually referring to *x*, then seeing *x* must be or involve a state with representational content, an element of which refers to *x*. (For Burge this is the singular element, other elements which enter into perceptual representational contents are what Burge calls *perceptual attributives* (p. 380). These are elements which attribute, e.g., properties or kinds, to the referent of the singular element). It may be a metaphysical truth that seeing *x* is or involves perceptual reference to *x*, and perhaps that’s part of what explains how seeing *x* is a relation to *x*. But invoking reference—and thus representation—goes beyond what we are ordinarily committed to in being committed to the relationality of seeing. It might be that the relationality of seeing *x* is best captured in non-representational terms. Some authors, for instance, propose that part of what is involved in seeing *x* is having an experience in which one is acquainted with *x*, where acquaintance isn’t a form of, nor does it imply, representation (see, e.g.,

Brewer (2011)). Such authors can't be accused of rejecting something we are ordinarily committed to in being committed to the relationality of seeing. Our *pre-theoretic* commitments aren't that determinate. (There is much more on representational and relationalist views of seeing in Part II below).

Likewise, it might be a metaphysical truth that if S sees x a causal relation must obtain between x and S (e.g., x must cause some sort of experience in S). Perhaps this is part of what explains why seeing x requires the existence of x . But, again, this goes beyond what we are ordinarily committed to in being committed to the relationality of seeing. (For arguments that a causal condition isn't a part of our ordinary *concept* of seeing, see Snowdon (1980, 1990, 1998))

In this section I have outlined one aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception—the fact that it is relational, and so subject to an existence condition (seeing x entails that x exists). I noted that the fact that we think of visual perception in this way is manifest in our ordinary talk ('see' in the basic perceptual sense has an existence-grammar). I have also suggested that we shouldn't conflate our ordinary commitment about the relationality of seeing with more theoretical commitments we might be inclined to invoke to capture or explain this fact about seeing. I turn now to discuss a further aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception: that pertaining to the visibility of features.

1.3.2 Visual Perception and Visible Features

There are features which we take to be visible. The shape of the lemon is one of its visible features, as is its colour. These are pre-theoretic claims. But how are we to flesh out these commitments? In this section I distinguish three senses in which we count entities as visible, in our ordinary thought and talk. One is an *object* sense (familiar from the way in which we take the lemon to be visible—as a potential object of sight). One is a *representational* sense, and the other is a *phenomenological sense*. Below I will spell out how we pre-theoretically suppose that visible features are visible in the representational and phenomenological senses. I will then consider whether we also pre-theoretically suppose

that they are visible in the object sense. I will suggest that two ways of trying to support the claim that we do pre-theoretically suppose this fall short of their target. For they can be accounted for just in terms of the other two senses. Moreover, taking visible features to be visible in the object sense turns out to involve controversial metaphysical and semantic commitments. So it is not obvious that we want to saddle our ordinary conception of visual perception with a commitment to the idea that visible features are visible in the object sense. I suggest that it is best to regard our ordinary conception of visual perception as just not committed either way of whether features are visible in the object sense.

On one way of understanding visibility, a thing is visible just if it is a potential *object* of visual perception. If a thing is visible in this sense let's say that it is visible in the *object* sense. We take various material objects, events, quantities of stuff, and so on, to be visible in this sense. In section (1.2) above I noted that this is partly because we take such things to be spatial things, and things that have looks. But the things we have been considering which are visible in this sense, have, or have aspects which have, visible *features*. Some of the features of the lemon, those pertaining to colour, say, are visible, but some aren't, those pertaining to its atomic structure, say. How do we ordinarily understand the visibility of features?

For a start I think we can say this. We take features, such as the yellow colour of the lemon, to be visible in a way similar to how we take contents—such as *that the meat is on the rug*—to be visible. Such contents count as visible not in the object sense, but in the sense that they are knowable on the basis of *vision*. Similarly, we take it that one can know, purely on the basis of vision, whether a thing is *yellow*. And in this sense, yellowness counts as a visible feature. More generally, one can represent a thing as yellow on the basis of vision. One can certainly do so in thought and belief. Some would suppose that one can do so in perception—the idea being that perception is a mode of representing. But this is a controversial theory. So let's leave it aside here. (Though I will discuss such theories in Part II). Let's say, then, that what we intuitively count as visible features are what we regard as visible in at least a *representational* sense. Do we regard such features as visible in any other sense?

We think that visible features can somehow figure in how things seem

or look to one in seeing. In giving faithful descriptions of how things are with one visually, when seeing some entity, one will, typically, not only make reference to the entity, but some of its features. When I see the lemon it looks *yellow* to me. I see the box and it looks *cubic* to me. Let's say, then, that what we intuitively count as visible features are what we regard as visible not only in a representational sense, but also in a *phenomenological* sense. One question in the metaphysics of perception concerns *what it is* for experiences to have characters which are associated with features in this way? Is it for one to represent those features? For those features to be present? Both? Something else? It is not obvious to me that we are committed on this *theoretical* issue. But we do take it that some features are such that they can be part of what—in *some sense*—determines the character of a visual experience. And that is the commitment I want to capture by claiming that we take some features to be visible in a phenomenological sense.

What I've said so far is consistent with the idea that the features we count as visible are not taken by us to be visible in the first sense, in the *object* sense. But, is there evidence from our ordinary thought and talk, that we do take (some) features to be visible in this way too? Consider the following example, from Warnock (1954) (p. 211)

(1) I saw the colour of Lloyd George's tie.

We think that utterances of sentences such as (1) can be true. And if 'see' here is the basic perceptual 'see', then that means we think that we can see things such as the colour of a tie as well as the tie which is coloured.

However, Warnock thinks that the most natural interpretation of 'see' in (1) is *not*, in my terms, the basic perceptual 'see'. It is rather the *epistemic* perceptual 'see'. Despite the overt form of (1), which is more common to basic perceptual uses, he thinks that the most natural interpretation of (1) is one on which it means: I can tell, by vision, what colour Lloyd George's tie was. What one thus says with a use of (1) is something more like: I see *that* the tie is such-and-such a colour. This point is developed in more detail by Dretske (1993). Consider the following

When perceptual verbs...are followed by abstract nouns (the difference, the number, the answer, the problem, the size, the

color) and interrogative nominals (where the cat is, who he is talking to, when they left), what is being described is normally an awareness of some (unspecified) fact. The abstract noun phrase or interrogative nominal stands in for some factive clause [e.g., true THAT clause]. Thus, seeing (being conscious of) the difference between *A* and *B* is to see (be conscious) *that* they differ. If the problem is the clogged drain, then to be aware of the problem is to be aware that the drain is clogged. To be aware of the problem, it isn't enough to be aware of (e.g., to see) the thing that is the problem (the clogged drain). One has to see (the fact) *that* it is clogged. Until one becomes aware of this fact, one hasn't become aware of the problem. Likewise, to see where the cat is hiding is to see that it is hiding *there*, for some value of "there." (pp. 117–118)

And shortly after this: one 'cannot be conscious of [e.g., see] an object's irregular shape without being conscious that [e.g., seeing that] it has an irregular shape...' (p. 118).

One way to take these remarks is as follows. Whenever 'see' is followed by an abstract noun phrase, the resulting sentence will be a contraction of some 'sees that...' or 'sees *wh...*' sentence, and best interpreted in terms of the semantics of such sentences, *not* sentences involving the basic perceptual 'see'. This accords with the selection restriction we discussed in section (1.2), which demands that 'see' in the basic perceptual sense takes a term for a *spatial* entity as a complement, and so not an abstract noun phrase. Now, sometimes the best semantic treatment of cases where 'see' is followed by an abstract noun phrase will involve the *purely* epistemic sense of 'see'. For instance, in discussing a challenge for a mathematical theory, or a logical proof, one might say: "It wasn't clear to me to begin with, but now I see the problem". Here, one says that they now see *what* the problem is, *that* the problem is ...). But sometimes the best semantic treatment for a case will involve reference to the epistemic *perceptual* sense of 'see', if the relevant noun phrase relates to a property associated with visual perception (e.g., a property which counts as visible in the representational, and/or phenomenological senses)—as in (1).

What is the relevance of these linguistic observations? It might have

seemed like the fact that we think that utterances of sentences such as (1) can be true revealed that we think that we can see—in the object of perception sense—features such as the colour of the tie. But if the linguistic observations are correct, then the mere fact that we think that utterances of sentences such as (1) can be true reveals *at most* that we take features, such as the colour of the tie, to be visible in the *representational* sense. For if such sentences have the epistemic perceptual sense, then that utterances of them can be true doesn't entail that there is the seeing of the relevant feature (as opposed to some other entity). In an utterance of (1), one says that one *sees that* Lloyd George's tie has such-and-such a colour. And semantically this doesn't involve a specification of a type of state of visual perception (as noted in section (1.2)). For all the semantics requires, and for all the truth of the utterance requires, the relevant type of state might have been a seeing of *the tie* (which looked, to the subject, to have a certain colour). So, if the linguistic observations are correct, then pointing out that we think that utterances of sentences such as (1) can be true does not itself indicate that we think that we can see features (in the object sense).

It seems right that in many cases when one utters something like “I can see the colour of his tie” or “Jane can see the irregular shape of the potato”, and so on, one is best interpreted as employing an epistemic perceptual sense of ‘see’. And as such *those* cases don't in themselves suggest that one can see features in the object sense. But is this right for *all* cases? Are there any true utterances where ‘see’ takes some such feature expression as a complement, where we think that what is really in play is the basic perceptual sense? We might wonder whether an example like the following might give us something along these lines: Suppose one says: “I was quite excited about visiting the blue lagoon in Iceland. I couldn't wait to see the blue in the spa! I'd heard about the shade, and even seen pictures, but it was wonderful to see it for myself.” Suppose also that this is followed by an utterance of this sentence:

(2) I am so happy that I saw the beautiful blueness of the spa water.

Let's pretend, for simplicity, that the spa water in the blue lagoon presents one special shade of blue (of course, there are many shades of blue to be found in the lagoon). We can imagine (2) being uttered by someone

who takes great pleasure in colours and shades (perhaps an artist). It is not obvious that, in this context, our subject's utterance of (2) concerns seeing *what* colour, or what shade of blue, the geothermal spa water has. Before she saw the blueness in the spa water, our subject already knew what specific colour the spa water had, and she knew this on the basis of vision (for she had seen photos). So when she expresses her joy at having seen the blue of the water for herself, it is tempting to suppose she is expressing joy at having witnessed it first hand. And one might think that a good way to capture what our subject is expressing here, in a way that accords with pre-theoretic intuition, is that she *saw*—in the basic perceptual sense—a *feature*—the blueness in the water.

If we do construe the case in this way, then we are treating the feature—the blueness of the spa water—as an *object* of visual perception. If we want this treatment to accord with our ordinary conception of visual perception, then there has to be a way of thinking about the feature on which it is a spatial entity which looks some way. (We can't be thinking of it as, say, a transcendent universal). How might we conceive of the blueness of the spa water, then, to make the story work? What sort of entity is it that our subject supposedly sees when she sees the blue of the lagoon? No doubt there are many options here, but one is to regard the entity in question—the blueness of the water—as a property instance or trope. Kalderon (2011a), for instance, thinks that we can see tropes or property instances, such as the yellowish red of the tomato, in the sense in which we can see things like tomatoes. (A classic defence of trope theory is to be found in D. C. Williams (1953) see also K. Campbell (1981), and for discussion see Loux (2006), p. pp. 71–78).

On this view the blueness of the water is a feature of the spa water, but it is not a repeatable entity. It is not a feature which can be exemplified by other particulars. It is not a universal, it is a *particular*. The blue of the lagoon, understood as a trope, is a feature which nothing other than the very spa water in the blue lagoon could have. Its very identity is somehow tied to what it is a feature of.

If we conceive of colour features as tropes, so that the blue of the water uniquely “belongs” to the water, we do not thereby deny that another particular (e.g., a different pool of water) might be exactly similar in colour. What we deny is that we have to understand such similarity

by appeal to universals. Such similarity would not, on such a trope account, be a matter of distinct particulars each exemplifying or sharing in one entity: a universal (e.g., *being blue of such-and-such a shade*). Two particulars can be exactly similar in colour if they have exactly similar colour tropes. For example, suppose the leaves on the hedge are exactly similar in colour. This is because each has a greenness trope, and those tropes are exactly similar. A certain sort of trope theorist's metaphysical spade will stop turning when it comes to the question of how we are to explain how features—understood as tropes—can be similar. As Loux puts it, that 'tropes resemble each other to whatever extent they do [can be] taken to be a primitive or analyzable feature of the world' (p. 74).

Importantly for our purpose here, tropes such as the blue of the water, the particular shape of the lemon, and so on, can be understood as spatial entities. They share their locations with the particulars they characterize (or at least, aspects or parts of those particulars). The blue of the lagoon is there where the spa water is. The shape of the lemon is there where the lemon is. Understood in this way tropes thus satisfy one condition we think is required for a thing to be a visible in the object sense. And we can think of tropes as entities which have looks. For instance, *that* greenness (of *that* leaf) looks very similar to *this* greenness (of *this* leaf). *That* shape (of *that* lemon), looks similar to *this* shape (of *this* lemon). Thus tropes can be understood to satisfy the two crucial conditions which we, in our ordinary conception of seeing, take to be conditions on visibility in the object sense. Perhaps there are other conditions tropes would also need to satisfy, but it is beginning to look like some tropes can intelligibly be candidate objects of visual perception—if they exist.

It might seem plausible, then, that when the subject of (2) talks of seeing the blue of the water, she is employing 'see' in the basic perceptual sense, and the nominal complement—'the blueness of the water'—functions as a concrete noun phrase which picks out a trope.

I think this is an intelligible story. But it is not obvious to me that we should accept it as a construal of how we pre-theoretically think of things. For if we do take it in this way, then we saddle our pre-theoretic understanding of visual perception (and related issues to do with visibility) with controversial and specific semantic and metaphysical commitments (albeit implicit and unarticulated commitments).

For instance, on the construal of the case we have been considering the blueness of the water is a spatial entity which looks some way. If this reflects how we ordinarily think about such cases, then we have this negative commitment: (A) such features are not Platonic universals, or entities of a similarly transcendent sort. But some metaphysicians will want to say that such features are transcendent universals. Relatedly, the construal of the case we've been discussing involves (B) the semantic claim that 'the blueness in the spa water', in contexts of the sort we have been considering, doesn't function as an abstract noun phrase denoting or expressing a transcendent universal. But again some will think that such expressions have a different semantics—one on which such expressions pick out transcendent universals. And we have been supposing that (C) 'the blueness of the spa water' can function to pick out a trope. And so we are committed to (D) the claim that tropes exist. But some will deny that there are such things as tropes. And even if we admit that there are such things as tropes, it is still a further question whether nominalizations of the sort we have been considering do refer to them.

I mean just to highlight, in (A)–(D), that the construal of the case I've been suggesting involves commitments which are controversial—which is not to say that they are *implausible*. Now in putting forward a *theory* of visual perception, controversial commitments are fine (as long as they can be defended). But we might wonder if such controversial commitments just fall out of how we ordinarily think about visual perception? If we accept the construal of the case I have been outlining, as a construal of how we ordinarily think about such cases, then we end up saddling our ordinary thinking about visual perception and visibility with the controversial metaphysical and semantic commitments. This *might* be acceptable, if, for instance, the way of treating the case we have been considering is overwhelmingly plausible. But if there is a more neutral option, then it is perhaps best to cautiously side with that option in the absence of further considerations. So, can we construe the case we've been discussing in an adequate or faithful way, without appeal to the idea that we see features in the contested sense? Here is one suggestion.

Our lover of colours who visited the blue lagoon saw the spa water in all its glory, for what it then was. She thereby had a visual experience which revealed the blue shade of the water to her. In a sense she *experi-*

enced the blue of the lagoon. It was visually manifest to her. Suppose our subject says: “It was brilliant, that colour just *struck me*. It was so vivid, and like nothing I’ve experienced before. I was so glad I visited the lagoon.” Suppose also, as above, that she expresses herself by saying: “I am so happy that I saw the beautiful blueness of the spa water”. What do we lose in trying to understand this scenario, and her expression of it, in a pre-theoretical way, if we admit no more than that the blue of the lagoon was visible to her in the phenomenological sense which we distinguished above? That is, what do we lose, if we describe the case *just* in terms of the idea that the blueness of the water was a crucial aspect of the character of her visual experience? (In some sense, to be determined by a theory of perception).

I don’t myself see what we lose here. It seems to me to be enough to account for her experience, and its conscious character, in a pre-theoretic way, to say that in seeing *the blue spa water*, she experienced it *as* blue, and it *looked to her to have* that very shade of blue she was interested in. There need be no mention of the blueness of the water, conceived as a trope, being an *object* of her experience. And although she expresses herself by talking about *seeing* the blueness of the water, can’t we legitimately understand that as just a way of giving expression to the fact that she had a visual experience in which the blue of the lagoon was manifest to her? That doesn’t demand that the blueness of the water was an *object* of her perception, for it may have been manifest to her in seeing the *spa water*, that is, manifest to her in the spa water’s appearing to her in some ways.

The point, then, is that there is a way of understanding this case which doesn’t commit us to the idea that features are objects of visual awareness, or that ‘the blueness of the water’ refers to a trope—and the controversial metaphysical and semantic commitments that go with such commitments. Unless there are other considerations which press us towards admitting that it is part of our ordinary understanding of visual perception that features can be visible in the object sense, we should instead say this: we pre-theoretically take features to be visible in the representational sense, and the phenomenological sense, but not in the object sense. That is not to say that we pre-theoretically *deny* that features of visible in the object sense, it’s rather that this is a respect in which our ordinary conception of visual perception is non-committal.

I turn now to discuss the fact that we conceive of visual perception as a mode of conscious awareness. This will lead us to discuss further the notions of visual experience and the conscious character of such experiences which I have made use of in the current section.

1.3.3 Visual Perception and Consciousness

It is part of our ordinary conception of seeing that it, along with other ways of perceiving, is a mode of conscious awareness. As Dretske (1993) notes

Seeing a tree, smelling a rose, a feeling a wrinkle is to be (perceptually) aware (conscious) of the tree, the rose, and the wrinkle (p. 115).

We think that seeing an entity is a way of being conscious of, or aware of that entity. And in terminology familiar from philosophical discussion, part of what this entails is that in seeing an entity one has a conscious *experience* of that entity. (I'll employ this way of talking too).

We think that the conscious awareness that visual perception constitutes is of a distinctive sort. As Kalderon (2011a) notes

The awareness involved in my visual perception is *sensory* in the way that the awareness of a passing thought in the stream of consciousness is not...Moreover, vision affords the subject with a distinctive *mode* of sensory awareness. Vision is not alone among the senses in providing information about the distal environment. Thus we can *see* the leaves rustling and *bear* them rustling. Perhaps, as Berkeley (1734) urged, we hear, at least in the first instance, the sound of the rustling leaves. But, if we do, then, at least in propitious circumstances, we hear the source of the sound by hearing the sound. So whereas vision affords the subject with a *visual* mode of awareness of the event, arguably at least, audition affords the subject with an *auditory* mode of awareness of the very same event (pp. 221–222).

The awareness we have in seeing is distinctive in that it is sensory, and thus different from other forms of awareness. And it is visual in character, and thus different from other forms of sensory awareness.

We pre-theoretically regard seeing as conscious, a mode of conscious awareness. I don't think that we can make sense of the idea of *consciously seeing* some entity yet there being no way the entity seems or appears or looks *to one* in seeing that entity. (This links up with the idea that we take entities which are visible in the object sense to be entities which have looks). Seeing, as we ordinarily understand it, then, is not like unconscious visual detection of, or unconscious perceptual sensitivity to, an entity. For presumably one can be visually sensitive to an entity without its presenting itself to one, in consciousness, in some way. And so I take it that part of what's involved in being committed to the idea that in seeing an entity we are consciously aware of that entity is a commitment to the idea that in seeing an entity one's awareness or experience of that entity will not just be visual in character, but will also have some more determinate conscious character—a character which grounds claims like “in seeing the lemon it looked yellowish to me”. In seeing an entity, there will be a way or ways it seems or appears or looks to one. (That is not to say that if one sees some entity one must be aware of, or notice, or understand, the character of the experience one has, just that one's experience must have some such character).

As noted in section (1.2) above, in the brief discussion of Strawson, when one sees an entity and describes the character of their experience, typically a faithful description will have to make reference to the entity or entities one experiences—some spatial aspect (or aspects) of mind-independent reality. Strawson's point provides a clue not only to how we conceive of what we see, but also to how we conceive of the character of the experiences we have in seeing. Our conception of the character of such experiences is as something which is typically describable in terms of what we see and the visible features of what we see.

Suppose I see a red postbox, in good light, and that my visual system is in good working order. If asked to describe my experience I might make reference to the presence of a postbox, and describe its qualities (e.g., the strong reddish colour of its surface, smoothness of its surface texture, the cylindrical shape of its main body, and so on). If it has peculiar features,

I might mention those too, if they seem to me to make a significant contribution to the character of my experience in seeing the postbox. (E.g., if the main body has a large gaping hole in it, I might offer information to that effect in describing my experience. I might then also pronounce on whether the hole looks empty to me, or whether it is filled with some stuff or objects).

In mentioning such entities and their features that is how I give expression to how things are in my visual consciousness when I see the postbox—to “what it is like for me”. My audience may come to get a sense of how things are, subjectively, for me, in seeing the postbox, if they have knowledge of what I am talking about and the visual appearances commonly associated with what I am talking about. That is, one might picture for oneself—in one’s mind’s eye—a typical looking postbox (given that I have not indicated, in my description, that it was *not* typical looking). One will also access one’s knowledge of the qualitative features I mentioned to form a sense of how things are with me consciously in my seeing of the postbox. In appropriate contexts (with a listener who has appropriate background knowledge, and imaginative capacities), such descriptions can successfully convey information about how things look to me or seem to me or appear to me in seeing—the character of my experience—not just information about the objects of my experience.

We can form expectations about the character of experiences if we are told what is experienced and what the manifest visible features of what is experienced are. If you ask me to imagine or think about the character of an experience I might have if I saw a football match for two minutes, and then also the character of the experience I might have in seeing a badger burrowing for two minutes, I can do that. How? I might recall times when I have seen events of those sorts. Or I might just appeal to my knowledge about how such events would typically appear—I would think about the constituents of such events, their qualities, how they would look to me, and how the qualities might manifest themselves in an experience. In the first case I might thus picture a bunch of men running around on a green field, with a ball flying around, a stadium, and so on and so on. In the second case I would picture a little black and white beast, rustling around in the dirt, or in a field. I am not saying that there is such a thing as *the* character of an experience in which so-and-so

sees a badger burrowing for two minutes. The point is just a point about what one would appeal to, in the abstract, to describe, how *one such* experience (of that type) might be. And the idea is that what one would appeal to, most of all, is the *objects* of the experience, and the manifest visible features of those objects.

Insofar as we have a pre-theoretic idea of what the conscious character of an experience is, it is something we describe, and think about, primarily in terms of the objects of experiences and their visible features. But in some contexts in addition to describing the things and features which manifest themselves as present to my eyes, I might also mention certain peculiarities of my own, or of the perceptual conditions, in describing the character of my experience. For instance, I might say: I am seeing a postbox, it looks normal but for the fact that I am wearing glasses with tinted lenses. (One can then further specify the character of one's experience by describing the lenses more specifically, e.g., the colour, strength of tint, etc). This will obviously be useless to one who has no conception of tinted lenses, but to someone who does, they might just be able to form a more accurate picture of the character of my experience (they might be able to imagine from within how things are, visually, with *me*).

In some conditions one may not even be able to hazard a guess as to some of *what* one sees. Suppose I just about see, through some thick fog, what is in fact a postbox. Perhaps it is illuminated somewhat. In describing the character of my experience I won't mention that I see a postbox. For I don't know that what I see is a postbox. I won't mention the shape of the postbox, since that is not manifest in my experience. But even in such a case I might still appeal to *some* of what I see—namely, the fog. And I will also appeal to some of the features which are manifest in my experience—the *colour* the postbox presents (e.g., that bulge of reddishness).

It is important to remember that I am just trying to describe (or flesh out) how we ordinarily conceive of visual perception. I am not saying that we would ordinarily talk in terms of the 'conscious character' of an experience. That is a bit of jargon. But we do, I think, have some pre-theoretic conception of the phenomena that we philosophers aim to talk and think about with that jargon. It is some of the content of that conception that I have been trying to describe.

I am not offering a theory of the character of experience, nor am I suggesting that we are, as part of our ordinary conception of seeing, committed to any such theory. It might be thought that because our most natural descriptions of the character of experiences appeal to what is present to us and the features of what is present to us—aspects of non-mental reality—a *constitutive account* of the character of such experiences, in cases of seeing, must appeal to the presence of such aspects of non-mental reality, as what *constitutively determines* the character of those experiences. Or, one might think, such an account must at least appeal to the *representation* of such aspects of non-mental reality as what determines the character of those experiences. Such theories may seem very plausible in light of our ordinary commitments, but that is not the same as our being (implicitly) *committed* on the matter. Likewise, it strikes me that our ordinary conception of visual perception is just not committed on whether or not we need to appeal to intrinsic, non-representational, non-relational but qualitative properties of experiences (qualia—on one conception) in order to account for their conscious character.

Not only is it part of our ordinary conception of seeing that it is a mode of conscious awareness, I think it is part of our ordinary understanding of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense that sentences of the form ‘*S* sees *x*’ ascribe to *S* a mode of conscious awareness of *x*. It is consistent with this commitment that there are alternative and appropriate ways of using perceptual vocabulary where there is such a thing as “unconscious perception”—these might be thought of as uses of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense that have undergone some sort of pragmatic modification resulting in a quasi-technical meaning. As Dretske notes

The word “perception” is often used more inclusively in cognitive studies. One perceives *x* if one gets information about *x* via an accredited sensory system whether or not this information is embodied in a conscious experience. Blindsight is thus classified as a form of vision. Although the subject is not conscious of *x*, she is nonetheless said to perceive *x* if she gets information about *x* through the eyes. A statistically significant number of correct answers when asked to guess... about the

properties of x demonstrates (according to this way of talking) perception of x . In this case, S perceives x , as they say, without awareness of x —unconscious perception (2010, pp. 54–55).

But ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense is not this inclusive, it implies conscious awareness. This doesn’t mean that it is part of the meaning of sentences of the form ‘ S sees x ’ where ‘see’ has the basic perceptual sense that they contain information about the *character* of S ’s experience (beyond the fact that it is visual). Suppose I say: “I can see John on the hill”. Part of what I have said, given what ‘see’ means, is that I have a visual experience with some conscious character or other. But it is not part of the *meaning* of my utterance that I convey any specific details or information about the character of my experience (though in a given context, I may communicate this, especially if I offer that assertion as a response to a request, perhaps of an accompanying vision scientist or curious philosopher of perception, to describe the character of my experience).

Even when the complement of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense is an expression replete with information about the visible characteristics of some entity, it is not part of the *meaning* of the relevant sentence that it conveys information about the character of the experience it ascribes. For instance, suppose I say: “I can see a red round bulgy tomato”. In an appropriate context with such an utterance I may well communicate details about the specific character of my experience (I may invite you to form a conception of the character of my experience in terms of the qualities I mention, and the presence of a tomato). But this is *not* semantically encoded. For this utterance could easily and truthfully be continued: “I see a red round bulgy tomato, but I see it as grey triangular and deflated”. It may be peculiar, but there is nothing incoherent, or even physically impossible about the scenario described here.

So even though it is part of our ordinary understanding of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense that sentences of the form ‘ S sees x ’ ascribe to S a mode of conscious awareness of x , sentences of that form don’t contain specific information about the character of the awareness they ascribe.

Now some authors claim that there is a class of cases which show that we have a quite ordinary notion of non-conscious perception (or non-conscious experience). The cases in question are what Carruthers (2000) calls cases of 'Absent-minded perception' (p. 148). Consider, then, the following

Consider routine activities, such as driving, walking, or washing up, which we can conduct with our conscious attention elsewhere. When driving home over a route I know well, for example, I will often pay no conscious heed to what I am doing on the road. Instead, I will be thinking hard about some problem at work, or fantasising about my summer holiday. In such cases it is common that I should then – somewhat unnervingly – 'come to', with a sudden realization that I have not the slightest idea what I have been seeing or physically doing for some minutes past. Yet I surely must have been seeing, or I should have crashed the car. Indeed, my passenger sitting next to me may correctly report that I *saw* the vehicle double-parked at the side of the road, since I deftly turned the wheel to avoid it. Yet I was not conscious of seeing it, either at the time or later in memory. My percept of that vehicle was not a conscious one.

This example is at one end of a spectrum of familiar phenomena, all of which deserve to be classed as examples of non-conscious perception. For there are, in addition, many cases in which, while continuing to enjoy conscious experience, I also display sensitivity to features of my environment which I do *not* consciously perceive. For example, while walking along a country track, and having conscious perceptions of many aspects of my surroundings, I may also step over tree roots and make adjustments for various irregularities and obstacles in my path of which I have no conscious awareness.

Since all the phenomena along this spectrum involve behavioural sensitivity to changing features of the environment, they deserve to be described as perceptual experiences which are non-conscious. For I would surely never have lifted my leg

just *so*, unless I had seen the presence of the root (Carruthers, p. 149).

There are two cases here, the first we can call the *Driving Case*, and the second the *Country Walk Case* (the Driving Case occurs, originally, in Armstrong (1968), pp. 231–232). In both cases we are to suppose that some subject sees some entity—a vehicle in the Driving Case and a tree root in the Country Walk Case. Let’s grant that in each case the subject sees the relevant object, and let’s grant that this claim involves a perfectly ordinary sense of ‘see’—the basic perceptual sense—used without any pragmatic modification. The idea, then, is that the subject’s perception in each case is absent-minded and so in a sense non-conscious. Our question is whether in these cases we should think that the subject’s perception is non-conscious in a way that is inconsistent with the idea that seeing in the ordinary sense involves conscious experience?

The Driving Case suggests that there can be non-conscious perception in one good—and quite ordinary—sense. That is, that one can see something and not be conscious of one’s seeing something. That is, that one can see something and not be consciously aware of one’s own state or episode of seeing (and also, plausibly, that one can see something and fail to be consciously aware *that* one is seeing something—that one is in such a state or undergoing such an episode). This is exactly how Carruthers puts the conclusion in the first paragraph quoted above when he says ‘I *saw* the vehicle... Yet I was not conscious of seeing it’. But this is entirely consistent with the idea that in seeing the vehicle one is consciously aware of *the vehicle*. So the Driving Case doesn’t challenge the claim that seeing *x*, as we ordinarily understand it, involves conscious awareness of *x*.

But as Carruthers goes on he seems to suggest there are other absent-minded perception cases—e.g., the Country Walk Case—which do involve the seeing of an entity without conscious awareness of *the entity*. In the Country Walk Case, in walking along a country track one sees a root (which one steps over) yet, Carruthers tells us, one has no conscious awareness of *it*—the root.

But what warrants this claim about the Country Walk Case? It is not at all obvious why it shouldn’t be treated in parallel fashion to the Driving Case: on the walk, one is not conscious of one’s *seeing* the root. But again

this is entirely consistent with the idea that in seeing it one is consciously aware of *it*.

In the Country Walk Case it seems acceptable to think that one sees and so is consciously aware of the root. Though one *is—consistently—absent-minded* in a number of ways: (a) one is not consciously aware of *seeing* the root, (b) one is not consciously aware *that* one is seeing the root. Furthermore, (c) one is not consciously aware *that* it (the root) is present or there (or thus-and-so). One can be consciously aware *of* something without being conscious that the relevant thing is thus-and-so.

More generally, the absent-minded perception cases don't in themselves suggest that one can see something in the ordinary sense yet not be consciously aware of it. They do help us to clarify what need not be involved in such conscious awareness. Seeing *x* doesn't necessarily involve conscious awareness in the sense of awareness of *seeing x*, nor in the sense of awareness *that* one is seeing *x*, nor does seeing *x* necessarily involve conscious awareness *that x* is some way. (These distinctions and the line of thinking I have applied here are forcefully and persuasively defended in Dretske (1993)).

In this section I have suggested that it is part of our ordinary conception of visual perception that it is a mode of conscious awareness. I claimed that part of what's involved in this commitment is that if one sees an entity then one must have an experience with some conscious character. We think of the character of the experiences we have in seeing as something we must, at least typically, describe in terms of what is seen and the manifest visible features of what is seen—in order for such descriptions to provide adequate and faithful accounts of the character of our experiences. This, I take it, is manifest in the meaning of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense. Of course, we can loosen the notion of perception in some contexts for legitimate purposes to describe some situations appropriately as cases of unconscious perception. And we can legitimately describe seeing as non-conscious if by that we just mean that one can see without being aware of one's seeing, or without being consciously aware that one sees, or without being consciously aware that what one sees is thus-and-so. But, and consistently with all of this, if

seeing is as we ordinarily think of it, then seeing an entity is a sort of conscious experience.

I turn now to discuss a related issue: what sorts of things can see, on our ordinary conception of visual perception?

1.3.4 Visual Perception and its Subjects

Given that we think of seeing as a mode of conscious awareness, we are committed to the idea that only entities that are capable of being the subject of conscious states are capable of seeing. This means that the category of things which can see, on our ordinary conception, is relatively narrow, on the natural assumption that the category of things which are capable of consciousness is relatively narrow. We think that it is typically and paradigmatically *animals*, or at least animate beings, that can see—including, obviously, human animals. For if anything is capable of bearing a conscious state it is an animate being.

I think that this is manifest in our ordinary uses of ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense (and indeed in the epistemic perceptual sense). It seems that ‘see’ in both of these senses is subject to a semantic selection restriction which requires that the term which functions as the subject of the verb denotes a conscious being (or collection of such beings). This imposes the condition that utterances of sentences of the forms ‘*S* sees *x*’ or ‘*S* sees that *p*’, with the basic perceptual and epistemic perceptual senses of ‘see’ respectively, can be true only if ‘*S*’ denotes a conscious being or collection of such beings. Now, sometimes in our ordinary talk we ascribe something *like* visual perception, with the verb ‘see’, to entities which aren’t capable of consciousness. For instance, here are two examples from Alm-Arvius (1993), p. 25 (my numbering):

- (1) The new satellite can see much smaller objects on the surface of the Earth.
- (2) Every time the scanner sees a letter A, the output port corresponding to A is activated.

We can imagine contexts where sentences such as (1) and (2) are used to make meaningful claims, and convey true information. But we wouldn’t ordinarily take such a use of (1) to suggest that the satellite is consciously

aware of those small objects on the surface of the Earth. And we wouldn't ordinarily take such a use of (2) to suggest that the scanner is consciously aware of the letter. For we don't regard such entities as conscious beings.

This indicates that in such uses we are not interpreting 'see' in any straightforward way. Such uses are stretched uses. They are uses where 'see' has undergone what is known as 'pragmatic loosening' (or 'widening' or 'broadening'). That is, in them 'see' is taken to apply more broadly than it does as a matter of its literal meaning. Such uses ascribe something resembling visual perception, but something which is not visual perception. We are inclined to think, that is, that a satellite or a scanner (or something else like a camera) can, in a sense, see things, but not in the ordinary sense, or not *literally*. Such devices are sensitive to visual stimuli, and perhaps in a sense they (involve computers which) process visual information. The way such devices interact with visual stimuli is sufficiently similar to visual perception for us to felicitously describe it in terms appropriate for describing visual perception. This is consistent with the idea that seeing, in the ordinary sense, is proper to just conscious beings.

Imagine now that there is an incredibly realistic robot, *R*. Now *R* displays all of the signs of human intelligence, emotion, action, awareness, and so on. And it is impossible to tell by looking at *R*, and perceiving *R* in a range of other ways, that *R* is indeed not human. (To find this out, one would have to consult *R*'s creators, or get inside *R* to see that *R* is not made up in the right way to be human). *R* certainly *appears* to be capable of visual perception in the way that humans are. *R* has artificial eyes, and an artificial visual system, which works reliably but not infallibly, like in the human case. *R* is capable of visually guided action, and is responsive in all sorts of ways to visual stimuli. We would very naturally ascribe visual perception to *R*. In doing so it doesn't at all seem like we are not speaking *literally*. *R* is thus, seemingly, different from the satellite and the scanner. *R*, it seems, can literally see you before him, as you can see him before you.

The case of *R* would threaten the idea that seeing is proper to conscious beings on the assumption that in ascribing visual perception to *R* we don't thereby ascribe conscious awareness to *R*. But this seems to be another way in which *R* differs from things like satellites and scanners. Because *R* is much more like an animate being—specifically, a human—than

those other devices are, in ascribing seeing to him I take it we would also mean to ascribe conscious awareness to him. (Whether those ascriptions can be *true* is of course a delicate question which we can ignore.) If we are inclined to think that despite the strong perceptible and functional similarities *R* bears to humans he cannot enjoy conscious awareness, then we will also be inclined to think that he can't *literally* perceive his environment. (Though it may be right to describe him as capable of perception in some looser more inclusive sense, like with the satellite and the scanner).

As noted, of the conscious beings we take to be capable of seeing *animals* are the paradigms (and the inclination to regard *R* as capable of such perception surely derives from the strong similarity he bears to human animals). But the animals that we take to be capable of seeing are those that are, as it were, "set up" in the right way. Obviously not all animals can see. Moles are usually counted as blind, as are some fish, and some particular animals are congenitally blind even if not blind *qua* species. Our understanding of how animals are set up in the right way for seeing begins, very crudely, with a bit of biological knowledge: such animals have (something like) *eyes* which are hooked up in some appropriate way to the brain. That is not to say that we think that anything which sees *must* be "set up" in *that* way, and also we allow that there may be artificial aspects to the way in which an animal is "set up" in the right way for seeing, e.g., with the aid of artificial devices such as retina implants. Though, animals, set up in the right way, are beings, we think, who, when in certain circumstances, when functioning properly, and when presented with visual stimuli, can just *see* those stimuli.

A little more precisely, we can say that something which is capable of seeing is something which is typically: (a) a certain sort of animal (or animate being) or something which is very similar to an animate being (like *R*) which is, (b) capable of conscious (visual) awareness, (c) is appropriately responsive to visual stimuli in certain circumstances, and (d) has appropriate sensory organs or capacities (e.g., eyes, a visual system, or some functional (perhaps artificial) equivalent). To be clear, I am absolutely not saying that (a)–(d) specify jointly necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as capable of seeing. (I think (b) and (c) approximate necessary conditions, but I am not sure whether (a) and (d) do). But this doesn't matter, since the point is one of elucidation, not

reductive analysis. (This is just as well since the occurrence(s) of ‘visual’ and ‘appropriate sensory organs’ probably don’t admit of useful analysis independently of the ideas of seeing and things that can see. And (a)–(d) are vague and imprecise). The point is that the properties mentioned in (a)–(d) seem to form the core of our *understanding* or *conception* of a thing which is capable of seeing since paradigms of things which can see do, I think, satisfy (a)–(d), and are plausibly things which can see at least partly in virtue of the fact that they satisfy (a)–(d). The point is that (a)–(d) specify properties which are typically explanatorily relevant, in our ordinary thought, as to whether something counts as capable of seeing.

Plausibly, it is because things like scanners, cameras, satellite equipment, and non-life-like robots, etc, can satisfy (c) and (d), or something very similar, that we extend our use of ‘see’ to count those things as capable of seeing. Such devices can thus be similar enough to paradigms of things that can see for us to speak felicitously and informatively, and in a sense accurately, in ascribing seeing to them. Language use admits of much flexibility and variation. But none of this challenges the ordinary thought that seeing in the ordinary non-extended and literal sense is proper to just conscious beings with a certain set up.

Summary

So far I have fleshed out our ordinary conception of visual perception in this way: visual perception is a relation in which a conscious being is consciously aware of an entity—a spatial entity, which looks some way. Seeing an entity involves a conscious visual experience of that entity. In such experience the entity appears or looks or seems some way to the subject of the experience. The subject may lack various sorts of higher-order awareness, but in seeing an entity she is nonetheless conscious *of* the entity. In the next Chapter I will discuss in detail how we ordinarily conceive of the relationship between visual perception and knowledge. As a bridge section to this discussion I want to end this Chapter by describing one aspect of how we conceive of the relationship between visual perception and belief.

1.4 Visual Perception and Belief

In this section I have two aims. First, and primarily, I want to suggest that on our ordinary conception of it, visual perception is, in a sense, non-doxastic and hence non-epistemic (these terms, and the relevant senses, will become clearer below). This is *not* the claim that visual perception *is* non-epistemic (which I wish to remain neutral on). It is a claim about our *ordinary conception of* visual perception. Second, I want to suggest that ‘see’ in the basic perceptual sense has a meaning which manifests this conception of visual perception as non-doxastic and non-epistemic. I think these issues—the conceptual and the semantic issues—can be fruitfully treated together. But before we can get to them we need to have some sense of what it would be for visual perception to be doxastic, or non-doxastic, and epistemic, or non-epistemic.

Suppose someone claims that seeing some thing requires both believing something about what one sees, and knowing something about what one sees. In very general terms, one thus claims that seeing some thing is both *doxastic* and *epistemic*. (If, as seems plausible, knowledge entails belief, then if seeing is epistemic it is doxastic, but not vice versa). Let’s just work with the claim that seeing is doxastic for the time being. We should straight away distinguish between two understandings of the claim that seeing is doxastic (see here Sibley (1971), and especially Close (1976)), first a strong, and then a weak understanding (where p here and throughout concerns what is seen, x):

(A1) S ’s seeing x is such that $\exists p$ such that S sees x entails S believes that p .

(B1) S ’s seeing x entails $\exists p$ such that S believes that p .

The difference between (A1) and (B1) is that in the former the existential quantifier takes wide scope, whereas in the latter it takes narrow scope. (A1) and (B1) are logically related in that (A1) entails (B1), but not vice versa. Thus (A1) is stronger than (B1). We can say, then, that according to (A1) seeing is doxastic in a *strong sense*, and according to (B1) seeing is doxastic in a *weak sense*.

We can perhaps get a grip on this distinction with an example. Suppose that Jane sees a screwdriver on the table. According to (B1) if Jane

sees the screwdriver she must have *some belief or other, any old belief*—so long as it is a belief about what she sees. But (A1) is more specific, and more demanding. It says that there is a logical connection between Jane’s seeing the screwdriver and her having some one *particular* belief (about what she sees)—for examples of what that belief might be, see below. In putting things this way, it is useful to bear the following note of Close’s in mind:

A note about the sense of ‘particular’ here: of course every belief is a particular belief; we could not say that *S* has beliefs, but that there is no particular belief that he has. We may say, however, that *if* such-and-such is true of *S*, then he must have *this* belief, i.e., there is a particular belief that he must have. Or we may say that if such-and-such is true of *S*, then *S* must have *some belief or other*, but that there is no particular one that he must have (Close (1976), p. 163).

If one has a conception of *belief* which requires that for *S* to have a belief, *S* must have a language, then neither (A1) or (B1) stand a chance of being true. For visual perception is certainly not restricted to creatures who have a language or linguistic capacities. To see an entity, as Dretske (1969) puts it, is to exercise ‘a primitive visual ability which is common to a great variety of sentient beings, an ability which we, as human beings, share with our cocker spaniel and pet cat’ (p. 4). But key authors who accept that in some sense belief is essential to perception don’t conceive of belief in this demanding way. For instance, Armstrong (1968) notes that

The beliefs involved [in perception] must be conceived of as sub-verbal beliefs. Animals can perceive, sometimes, we believe, better than we can, but they lack words entirely. And we ourselves are often hard put to translate our perceptions into words. If we think of the wealth and subtlety of the information that we gain by our eyes...we see that much of it eludes the relatively coarse mesh of the net of language (p. 209).

And authors such as Dretske (1969) who don’t accept various doxastic and epistemic theses about perception are willing to grant that ‘a person (or animal) may know that something is the case and believe it...’ (p. 6).

I am not aware of any authors who adopt (A1). But on an unqualified statement of his view, Armstrong (1968) is committed to (B1). Armstrong himself says that his aim is to ‘give an account of perception as the acquiring of belief’ (p. 208). He continues as follows:

It is clear that the biological function of perception is to give the organism information about the current state of its own body and its physical environment, information that will assist the organism in the conduct of life. This is a most important clue to the *nature* of perception. It leads us to the view that perception is nothing but the acquiring of true or false beliefs concerning the current state of the organism’s body and environment (p. 209).

These remarks suggest that Armstrong thinks that perceiving, and so seeing, just is the acquiring of some belief or other about what is perceived (or some set of beliefs about what is perceived). This entails (B1). If seeing *x* just is acquiring some belief or other about *x*, then obviously *S*’s seeing *x* requires that *S* has some belief or other about *x*. (Although Armstrong’s position as stated in the quotes above is consistent with (A1), in Armstrong’s subsequent discussion he says nothing to indicate that he has this stronger thesis in mind). But this is an unqualified statement of Armstrong’s view. Armstrong himself considers challenges to the view stated as such, and what he ends up with still counts as an analysis of perception in terms of belief, yet not obviously one which involves a commitment to (B1) (similar things can be said of the belief theory of perception developed in Pitcher (1971), for instructive discussion see A. D. Smith (2001) especially, pp. 287–292).

A more recent view which arguably does involve a commitment to (B1) is put forward by Glüer (2009). Glüer offers considerations in favour of the view that perceptual experience is a kind of belief. Specifically, she argues that perceptual experiences are beliefs (with contents) which concern the so-called ‘phenomenal properties’ of entities, properties like *looking F* (e.g., looking red, a property a material object, such as a tomato, might have) (p. 311). On the natural assumption that seeing an entity requires having an experience (as) of that entity, seeing an entity, on Glüer’s

view, requires having some belief or other about that entity (some belief or other which concerns the way or ways the entity looks).

On the other side we have authors such as Dretske (1969, 1979, 1993). Take (A1) first. Dretske (1969) says ‘there is a way of seeing such that for any proposition, *P*, the statement ‘*S* sees *D*’ does not logically entail the statement ‘*S* believes *P*’ (p. 6). This is just to deny (A1) above. (Note that the way of seeing that Dretske is talking about here is what I’m calling visual perception, or seeing).

Now, since (A1) is stronger than (B1), denying (B1) results in a more radical non-doxastic (and hence non-epistemic) position, than denying merely (A1) does. There is some dispute about whether in his early work (that is, *Seeing and Knowing*) Dretske also meant to endorse the more radical non-doxastic position obtained by denying (B1). Close (1976) suggests that he didn’t whereas Sibley (1971) suggests that Dretske did indeed commit to the ‘more extreme position’ (p. 85). It is clear, however, from his *later* work that Dretske does indeed adopt the more extreme position. In his (1979) Dretske asks whether when one sees something ‘having a belief [some belief or other, even if no belief in particular] *about the perceptual object is essential to its...being seen*’ (p. 99). He goes on to affirm that it is not, for ‘seeing *X* is compatible with *no beliefs about X*’ (p. 100, my emphasis). If *S* can see *x* yet have *no* beliefs about *x*, it can hardly be that seeing *x* requires *S* to have some belief or other about *x*.

So, there are authors who endorse (B1), and authors such as Dretske who deny both (B1) and (hence) (A1). I haven’t gone into the details of these different positions because my concern in this Chapter, as noted, is not with the correct account of the nature of seeing. I am interested, rather, in our ordinary *conception* of seeing (and also, in the basic perceptual sense of ‘see’). I want to ask whether on our ordinary conception, seeing involves a commitment to either or both of (A1) and (B1). If our ordinary conception of seeing involves a commitment to (A1), then that means we are committed to the idea that seeing is doxastic in the strong sense. If our ordinary conception of seeing involves a commitment to (B1), then that means we are committed to the idea that seeing is doxastic in the weak sense. I will argue that our ordinary conception of seeing involves a commitment to the *negation* of (A1), and that is to say that as we ordinarily conceive of it, seeing is *non*-doxastic (and hence non-epistemic)

in the strong sense. I will tentatively suggest that we are not committed either way on the truth of (B1), and so, in that respect our ordinary conception of seeing is incomplete (since, I assume, there *is* a fact of the matter about (B1)). I'll then relate this briefly to the basic perceptual 'see'.

Why think that in our ordinary conception of visual perception we are committed to rejecting (A)? This comes out in our pre-theoretic attitude towards some examples. And here I follow Dretske (1969). Consider the following

- (1) Jane believes that the screwdriver is on the table.
- (2) Jane knows that the screwdriver is on the table.
- (3) Jane sees the screwdriver on the table (adapted from Dretske, p. 7).

It is part of the meaning of (1) that a use of it ascribes to Jane a specific belief—the belief that *the screwdriver is on the table*. And it is part of the meaning of (2) that a use of it ascribes to Jane a specific item of knowledge—the knowledge that *the screwdriver is on the table*. But do we think that (3) ascribes to Jane a specific belief?

What would that belief be? One might suggest that it is the belief with the content *the screwdriver is on the table*, since that content is closely related to the content expressed by the complement expression in (3). But this doesn't seem plausible. First, 'Jane sees the screwdriver on the table, but she doesn't believe that the screwdriver is on the table' doesn't at all sound contradictory, meaningless, infelicitous, etc. Quite unlike 'Jane believes that the screwdriver is on the table, but she doesn't believe that the screwdriver is on the table', which is explicitly contradictory.

Moreover, we think that (3) can be true even if Jane turns out to be, say, an infant in arms who has no conception of a screwdriver, or a table, and so, even if Jane turns out to be incapable of forming *such* a belief. (Which is not to say that Jane is incapable of forming *any* belief). If we find out that Jane lacks the capacity to form the belief that the screwdriver is on the table, we don't take *that itself* to show that Jane doesn't *see* the screwdriver on the table. That's not how we ordinarily conceive of such situations.

Suppose instead that Jane is capable of forming such beliefs. But now suppose that Jane's view of the screwdriver is somewhat obscured or con-

fused, to the point where she is in no position to form the belief that the screwdriver is on the table. Yet we are happy that in such a situation (3) *might* still be true of Jane—it all depends upon how obscure or confused her view of it is. She might still see it even if she can't quite make out precisely what it is (is it a screwdriver or a pencil?), what it is on (is that a chair, a worktop, a table, a box?), and so on. As Dretske (1969) notes

One can see a screwdriver without believing that what one is seeing is a screwdriver, without believing that there are any screwdrivers, without even knowing what screwdrivers are. If anyone needs to be convinced of this point, I suggest they ask themselves whether they have never seen a maple tree, or an electrical capacitor, without realizing that it was a maple tree or an electrical capacitor (p. 7).

So, it seems on our ordinary view of seeing we wouldn't take a use of (3) to ascribe a belief or item of knowledge with the specific content: *the screwdriver is on the table*. We think that (3) can be true even when the associated belief claim is false. So we don't ordinarily suppose that seeing the screw driver on the table must involve *that* belief.

Perhaps the problem here is just with the specific propositional content I have suggested we focus on. But what *other* specific content might be in play? Surely no content the believing of which requires the concept of a screwdriver—for the reasons given above. What else then? Perhaps the specific content must be something more like: *it is there* (where 'it' expresses a purely demonstrative way of thinking about what is seen), or *it exists*, or *that exists* (where 'that' expresses a purely demonstrative way of thinking about what is seen).

But once again 'Jane sees the screwdriver on the table, but she doesn't believe that it is there/it exists' doesn't at all sound contradictory, meaningless, infelicitous, etc. And we can imagine situations in which (3) is true and even those belief claims are not true. Suppose that Jane thinks she is hallucinating, and as a result just doesn't form the beliefs she usually forms in perceptual situations (she may think she has been given a particularly strong hallucinogen which induces incredibly realistic hallucinations in her as of real life scenes). Jane is wrong, she *is* seeing the screwdriver on the table. But her belief that she is hallucinating stops her

from believing that *it is there, that exists* etc. (On this sort of response see Dretske (1969), pp. 7–8, and Dretske (1993), p. 120).

These considerations support the claim that on our ordinary conception of visual perception we reject (A1)—that is, that on our ordinary conception of seeing, we regard seeing as non-doxastic in the strong sense. We think that it is not the case that there is a specific *p*, which is such that if Jane sees the screwdriver on the table, then Jane believes that *p*. And this is a representative example (for others, see Dretske (1969, p. 4–18)).

It seems fair to say, too, that this is manifest in the basic perceptual ‘see’. For we don’t think that it is *part of the meaning* of sentences like (3) that that they ascribe a specific belief or item of knowledge. There is an important semantic contrast between sentences of the form ‘*S* sees *x*’, where ‘see’ has the basic perceptual sense, on the one hand, and sentences of the form ‘*S* believes that *p*’, or ‘*S* knows that *p*’, or ‘*S* sees that *p*’ (on either of the epistemic senses of ‘see’) on the other. It is part of the meaning of sentences of the form ‘*S* believes that *p*’ that uses of them ascribe to *S* a specific belief (that is, a belief with a specific propositional content, *p*). Likewise, it is part of the meaning of sentences of the form ‘*S* knows that *p*’ that uses of them ascribe to *S* a specific item of knowledge (that is, knowledge with a specific propositional content, *p*). And the same for uses of ‘*S* sees that *p*’, as we saw above. In contrast, it is not part of the meaning of sentences of the form ‘*S* sees *x*’ that a use of such a sentence ascribes to *S* a specific belief or item of knowledge. That is, assuming that ‘see’ has the basic perceptual sense, it is not part of the meaning of any sentence of the form ‘*S* sees *x*’ that there is some proposition, *p* (concerning *x*), which is such that ‘*S* sees *x*’ entails ‘*S* believes that *p*’.

But now consider the following utterance: “I see a bus approaching, but I do not believe [know] that a bus is approaching”. This seems absurd. Should we take it, then, that it *is* part of the meaning of ‘I see a bus approaching’ that it entails ‘I believe/know that a bus is approaching’? Or that it is part of our ordinary understanding of seeing that it has such specific doxastic and epistemic implications? I don’t think so. First of all, as Dretske says

Normally, people do not *say* they see a bus approaching unless

they have identified, in some way, the approaching vehicle *as* a bus. But, clearly, this is an utterance implication, not a truth implication. It is his *saying* he sees a bus, not his *seeing* a bus, which implies that he believes the approaching vehicle to be a bus. *S*'s statement 'I see a bus approaching' can be quite true without its being true that *S* believes he sees a bus approaching; he may have said this (without believing it) for the purpose of distracting the attention of his companions at the bus stop (1969, p. 36).

One of Dretske's points here is that all such examples show is that *ascriptions* of seeing—understood as *utterances*, as opposed to the semantic contents of such utterances, or the sentence types such utterances involve—may have specific doxastic and epistemic implications. Dretske is not saying that it logically follows from the fact that one utters "I see a bus approaching" that one believes that a bus is approaching. That is not what he means, in this context, by 'implication'. Rather, in *asserting* that one sees a bus approaching, in certain contexts, one *conveys the information* that one believes that a bus is approaching. In this sense, that one believes that a bus is approaching can be an 'utterance implication' of an utterance of a sentence of the type 'I see a bus approaching'. To be clear, in later work Dretske puts the same point in terms of the distinction between implication and Gricean implicature (see Grice (1989)), Dretske says

Saying you are aware of an *F* (i.e., a thing, *x*, which is *F*) implies (as a conversation implication) that you are aware that *x* is *F* [e.g., believe that *x* is *F*, know that *x* is *F* [my addition]]. Anyone who said he was conscious of (e.g., saw or smelled [Dretske's addition]) an armadillo would (normally) imply that he thought it was an armadillo. This is true but irrelevant (Dretske (1993), p. 117)

The conversational implicature is irrelevant, that is, in Dretske's eyes, to the *truth* of the statement. We can add: it is irrelevant to what the statement entails as part of its *meaning*, and whether we would *regard* the statement as true. That is, the fact that such utterances convey specific

doxastic and epistemic information is consistent with my claim that we are committed to the rejection of (A1), and with the claim that this is manifest in the meaning of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense. The challenge, which turns on the absurdity or infelicity of certain *utterances*, thus falls short of its target.

Another way of appreciating that the challenge is flawed goes as follows. The fact that some *ascriptions* of seeing have these doxastic and epistemic conversational implicatures is not a special fact about ascriptions of *seeing*. As Dretske notes 'certainly I would never *say* of myself that I tripped over a sleeping dog unless I had identified what I tripped over as a sleeping dog' (p. 35). But 'I tripped over a sleeping dog'—qua sentence type—clearly doesn't entail 'I have identified what I tripped over as a sleeping dog', or 'I believe that I just tripped over a sleeping dog', or 'I believe that that is a sleeping dog', and so on. If I *assert*: "I tripped over a sleeping dog" without knowing (or believing) that what I tripped over was a sleeping dog, that may, in normal circumstances, be an inappropriate utterance. But it would not (we think) thereby be *false*.

If the challenge regarding some seeing ascriptions is to be taken to speak against the negative claims I have made, then by parity of reasoning we would have to accept that we conceive of tripping over a sleeping dog as an occurrence which has specific doxastic and epistemic implications. This is absurd. We would also have to accept that sentences such as 'I tripped over a sleeping dog' have as part of their meaning doxastic and epistemic implications. But this is also absurd.

We began this discussion with these claims about the nature of seeing:

(A1) *S*'s seeing *x* is such that $\exists p$ such that *S* sees *x* entails *S* believes that *p*.

(B1) *S*'s seeing *x* entails $\exists p$ such that *S* believes that *p*.

I bracketed the question of whether these claims are true. I have argued, however, that we are committed, in our ordinary conception of seeing, to the rejection of (A1). I have also said that this negative claim is reflected in the semantics of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense. Now everything I've argued for so far is consistent with the idea that as part of our ordinary

conception of seeing we *accept* (B1). We regard seeing as *non*-doxastic in the strong sense, but for all that we might regard it as *doxastic* in the weak sense.

What is our attitude towards (B1)? Consider the case discussed briefly above in which Jane thinks she is hallucinating screwdriver on the table (when in fact she is seeing one), and so doesn't even form the belief that *it*—what she sees—is there, or exists. Can we not extend this case, within the limits of how we ordinarily think of visual perception and its relation to belief, as one in which Jane sees the screwdriver yet has *no beliefs whatsoever* about what she sees? This is not obvious. Jane doesn't believe that *it is there*, but she might for all that believe that *it doesn't exist*, or *it is not really there* (where *it*, in Jane's thought, latches onto what she in fact sees, but wrongly *regards* as a figment of her imagination (or hallucination)).

I am not suggesting that this is clear cut at all. I think it is more difficult to get a determinate commitment from our *ordinary conception* of visual perception on cases like this—on the possibility of one seeing something yet having no beliefs about it whatsoever. A more honest approach is one on which we admit that our ordinary conception of visual perception is incomplete in some respects. And so we shouldn't necessarily expect a commitment to either the truth or falsity of (B1) in our ordinary conception of visual perception. I am not suggesting that it is indeterminate whether *seeing x* is doxastic or epistemic in the weak sense. I am just suggesting that it is not obvious that our ordinary conception of visual perception involves a commitment on this either way.

I've tried to suggest that we ordinarily conceive of visual perception as non-doxastic and non-epistemic (with respect to the strong sense). I have also suggested that this is reflected in the meaning of 'see' in the basic perceptual sense. And towards the end of this section I claimed that it is less clear whether we have an ordinary commitment on whether visual perception is doxastic or epistemic in the weak sense. Perhaps I am wrong that our ordinary conception of visual perception is incomplete in this respect, but nothing will hang on this in what follows. The negative claims I have made are the important claims, for they will figure in some of the discussion in subsequent Chapters.

1.5 Conclusion

In the current Chapter I have suggested that our ordinary conception of visual perception can be understood in terms of the following features: seeing an entity x , is a mode of conscious awareness in which a conscious being is perceptually related to a visible entity. There are many different kinds of entities which conscious beings capable of visual perception can be so related to. (But in being potential objects of visual perception they must be spatial entities which have looks). In being a mode of conscious awareness visual perception of x involves an experience with some conscious character. One cannot see x unless x seems or looks or appears some way or other to one. Typically, the most natural and faithful descriptions of the character of such experiences make reference to what is present to one in visual perception—seen entities and their manifest visible features. I also suggested that we regard visual perception as non-doxastic and non-epistemic in a sense. A conception of visual perception along these lines is consistent with various different theories of perception.

One important feature of visual perception, as we ordinarily understand it, not discussed in this Chapter, is its epistemic significance. We regard visual perception as among the means of knowing available to us. We are now in a better position to characterize and flesh out this specific aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception. That is the task for the next two Chapters.

Chapter 2

Visual Perception as Knowledge Explaining (I)

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 I discussed our ordinary conception of visual perception. One key aspect to our ordinary conception of visual perception, which I left out of that discussion, pertains to the fact that we think of seeing as *epistemically significant*. The pre-theoretic commitment I intend this bit of jargon to capture is that *by* seeing entities in our environment we can *know* things about them (that is, not just have thoughts about them, but be genuinely *knowledgeable* about them). In other words, the pre-theoretic commitment is that visual perception is—like perception in other modalities, but also reasoning, remembering, receiving testimony, and the like—among the *means of knowing* available to us (in other terminology, visual perception is a *way* of knowing). In the current Chapter, and the next, I want to flesh out this epistemic aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception. And so in the current Chapter, and the next, I am continuing to address the first of the two questions I set out in the Introduction to this thesis, namely, how are we to properly characterize, in philosophically useful terms, the ordinary idea that visual perception is a means of knowing?

We may well puzzle over the idea that we have knowledge of our environments, and we may even come to sceptical conclusions. But it is surely beyond dispute that as part of our *common sense* perspective on perception and knowledge, we do think of visual perception as a means of knowing.

It is a perfectly ordinary idea that by seeing things in the environment one can know about them. Suppose, for instance that I am sitting at my desk, in good lighting, looking down at the stack of books before me (the books are not disguised or camouflaged). I have excellent vision. In this situation, I *see* the books before me and thereby *know* that there are books before me. To *common sense*—and so without introducing peculiar philosophical considerations—it is unquestionable that in such a case I know, by visual means, that there are books before me.

Further evidence that we are committed to the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing comes from the fact that we understand statements such as “Jones can see that there are books before him” and, in suitable conditions, we are quite happy to accept such statements as straightforwardly true. In accepting such statements as true we are accepting that the relevant subject knows the relevant proposition *by visual means* (that is, that Jones knows, by visual means, that there are books before him). (This point relies on the semantics of the relevant type of ‘*S* sees that *p*’ sentence offered in section (1.2.2)).

But how can we characterize, in more detail, the very idea that visual perception is a means of knowing? In section (2.5) I offer an *explanatory characterization* of this pre-theoretic idea. On this characterization, the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing is equivalent to the idea that visual perception is capable of explaining knowledge in an epistemically satisfactory way—that visual perception is something which can *explain how* some *S* knows some *p* on some occasion, in an epistemically satisfactory way. Thus, we are to understand our conception of visual perception’s epistemic significance (of the idea that it is among the means of knowing available to us) in terms of the idea that it is knowledge explaining. All of this will be clarified in the remainder. This characterization is not original, I draw on an idea expressed in Snowdon (1998), and developed extensively in a number of works by Cassam (see e.g., 2007; 2008; 2009). But I want to convey the idea in my own way (appropriate to the aims I have in the remainder of the thesis) and extend upon, defend, and clarify the characterization where possible. That is the task of sections (2.2) – (2.4).

In addressing this characterizing task one runs the risk of changing the subject. That is, one runs the risk of giving a sense to what it is for visual

perception to be a means of knowing which isn't true to how we ordinarily think of things. I will thus argue, in the next Chapter, that various aspects of our thought and talk regarding visual perception and knowledge manifest the explanatory characterization. So although the characterization I offer is somewhat philosophical in that it employs concepts and ways of thinking distinctive of philosophy (and perhaps some other academic disciplines), in *substance* it is a characterization of a quite ordinary way of thinking about visual perception and how it is epistemically important to us.

Whether or not the common sense perspective which the explanatory characterization aims to capture is *correct* is not something I will discuss in this Chapter or the next. I am not claiming that how we ordinarily think and talk about things shows that visual perception *is* a means of knowing. My task in these Chapters is just one of exploring, and giving a fuller characterization of, the very idea that visual perception is epistemically significant. The idea is manifest in our ordinary thought and talk, so it makes sense to appeal to such thought and talk in *characterizing* the idea. The hope is that the resulting explanatory characterization will provide a framework for further substantive philosophical enquiry, which I'll take up in subsequent chapters.

2.2 Ways and Means of Knowing

In discussing P. F. Strawson's (1974/2008) work on perception, and whether reflection on the link between perception and knowledge can form part of a rationale for Strawson's preferred causal theory of the concept of perception, Snowdon says that we treat it as

totally unproblematic that someone's knowledge that P can be explained by saying that they saw that P (1998, p. 301).

If this is correct, then it suggests that we think that there is an *explanatory* link between visual perception and knowledge. On the face of it, this seems right. In many contexts where explanations of knowledge are sought, at least with questions of the form: how does so-and-so know that *p*? we do find explanations given in terms of visual perception satisfactory (there will be various examples of this in the discussion below).

But what is the significance of this? In his development of Snowdon's remark, one of the things Cassam does is suggest that insofar as visual perception is a *means of knowing* the link between visual perception and knowledge is an explanatory link. In other words Cassam uses the idea that there is an explanatory relationship between visual perception and knowledge to cash out the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing. The result is an *explanatory conception* of visual perception as a means of knowing.

I want to use Cassam's explanatory conception of visual perception as a means of knowing and feed it into what above I called the *explanatory characterization* of our pre-theoretic idea that visual perception is a means of knowing. To be in a position to do this we first need to have a firm grip on what it is to have an explanatory conception of means of knowing in general. We then need to see what an application of that general conception to visual perception specifically will yield. (These issues are what I am concerned with in the current section and sections (2.3)–(2.4) below). We will then be in a position to give an explanatory characterization of our intuitive idea that visual perception is a means of knowing, and this is what I do in section (2.5) below.

2.2.1 Cassam on Ways of Knowing

Cassam (2007a) first introduces the explanatory conception of a means of knowing in other terms, namely in the terminology of 'ways of knowing'. On the explanatory conception, ' ϕ -ing that p is a way [means] of knowing that p just if it is possible satisfactorily to explain how S knows that p by pointing out that S ϕ s that p ' (p. 340). For example, I know that there will be a tube strike today because I read that there will be a tube strike. On the explanatory conception, my reading that there will be a tube strike counts as a way of knowing that there will be a tube strike because pointing out that I read that there will be a tube strike provides a satisfactory explanation of my knowledge. As another example, suppose I know that the lemon before me is yellow because I can see that it is yellow. On the explanatory conception, my seeing that the lemon before me is yellow counts as a way of knowing that the lemon before me is yellow because pointing out that I see that the lemon before me is yellow

provides a satisfactory explanation of my knowledge.

In developing the explanatory conception, Cassam notes that it ‘doesn’t insist that a satisfactory explanation of someone’s knowledge that p must always be something of the form ‘ S verbs that p ’” (p. 347). Part of the point here is to allow explanations of knowledge where the relevant way of knowing is couched in non-propositional vocabulary. And part of the point of this is to avoid a restriction on ways of knowing to propositional attitudes. So, more generally, Cassam’s explanatory conception of ways of knowing is: ϕ -ing $_$ is a means of knowing that p just if it is possible to satisfactorily explain how S knows that p by pointing out that S ϕ s $_$ or can ϕ $_$, where ϕ is a verb, and the blanks here can be filled with expressions for propositional complements (e.g., THAT clauses), but also non-propositional complements (e.g., noun phrases or small clauses).

One way in which Cassam motivates this relaxation of the explanatory conception draws on the fact that we are happy to regard cases where one sees an entity in an environment as ways of knowing (as well as cases where one sees *that* an entity is some way). Cassam gives an example where in response to the question of how one knows that the cigarette lighter is under the desk one’s response is: “I can see it” (p. 346). In this case what one specifies as one’s way of knowing—seeing the lighter—is, Cassam says, ‘not a propositional attitude’ (p. 347). The explanatory conception of ways of knowing, Cassam tells us, has

no particular interest in defending the idea that ways of knowing must be propositional attitudes. Indeed, it takes the cigarette lighter dialogue as showing why such a claim would be indefensible. When it comes to what counts as a way of knowing the explanatory conception is pretty relaxed. The most that it insists on is that ways of knowing are expressible by sentences of the form ‘ S verbs’ (p. 347)

A further feature of the explanatory conception of ways of knowing is that it doesn’t require explanations of knowledge to be entailing explanations. An entailing explanation of some explanandum E is an explanation where the explanans entails E . Thus, the explanatory conception of ways of knowing doesn’t embed an entailing conception of explanation.

On an entailing conception of explanation *A* (the explanans) explains *B* (the explanandum) only if *A* entails *B* (or '*A*' explains '*B*' only if '*A*' entails '*B*')—one of the conditions on non-statistical scientific explanation for Hempel was that the explanans statement logically entail the explanandum statement, see Hempel and Oppenheim (1948).

Now, in general we don't intuitively require explanations to be entailing explanations, and we don't intuitively require specifically epistemic explanations to be entailing explanations. On the first point, consider the following example:

Suppose that *S* was in London this morning and is now in Paris. How did he get to Paris? He caught the Eurostar from London. This explains how *S* got to Paris but, as seasoned travellers know only too well, '*S* caught this morning's Eurostar from London' does not entail '*S* is now in Paris'. Trains can break down (Cassam (2008), p. 40).

Here Cassam considers a situation in which one asks for an explanation of how *S* got to Paris from London. The explanation given specifies the means by which *S* got to Paris, namely, by taking the train. But taking the Paris train from London provides no guarantee of getting to Paris, there are no entailments between the relevant sentences here. But we still regard such an explanation as perfectly satisfactory. And this is representative of various mundane everyday explanations.

And Cassam argues that even in specifically epistemological contexts some of the explanations we give are not entailing explanations, but these are as readily accepted as is the above explanation. In fact, he argues more specifically that, in understanding ways of knowing, on an explanatory conception of ways of knowing

entailment is a double irrelevance; for a sentence of the form '*S* verbs that *P*' [or '*S* verbs ___'] to provide a satisfactory response to 'How does *S* know that *P*?' [a satisfactory explanation of *S*'s knowledge] it is neither necessary nor sufficient that '*S* verbs that *P*' [or '*S* verbs ___'] entails '*S* knows that *P*' (Cassam (2007b), p. 346).

We don't think that entailment is necessary for explanation in these epistemological contexts, for, as we observed above, one can explain how they know that the lighter is under the desk by pointing out that they can see the lighter under the desk. But '*S* sees that lighter under the desk' doesn't, we think, entail '*S* knows that the lighter is under the desk' (see section (1.4) above). *S* might see the lighter but mistake it for a different sort of object, or *S* might see the lighter but not realize that it is under the desk. And there are various other examples which make the same point. For instance, as Cassam observes, one might read in Quine's autobiography that Quine was born in Akron. That can surely be a satisfactory explanation of one's knowledge that Quine was born in Akron. But it is not an entailing explanation. '*S* read that Quine was born in Akron' doesn't entail '*S* knows that Quine was born in Akron', since the former doesn't entail 'Quine was born in Akron', but the latter does. And entailment is not sufficient for explanation in these contexts. The simplest way to see this is that trivially '*S* knows that *p*' entails '*S* knows that *p*', but the former doesn't *explain* the latter (Cassam, p. 339–340).

Considerations such as these help us to see why the explanatory conception of ways of knowing not only doesn't, but intuitively shouldn't embed an entailing conception of explanation. It is consistent with this that some ways of knowing *do* entail knowledge. It is even consistent with this general point that for some ways of knowing which do entail knowledge, the fact that they entail knowledge is relevant to them being explanatory. (Though we shouldn't *expect* the fact that some way of knowing is knowledge entailing to have anything to do with its knowledge explaining role). In the next section when I discuss in more detail the application of Cassam's explanatory conception to visual perception, I will suggest that although explanations of knowledge such as: "I know that the lemon is yellow because I can see that it is" are entailing explanations, what does the explanatory work is something which doesn't entail knowledge—which suggests that the fact of entailment is irrelevant to the fact of explanation.

In addition to helping us see why the explanatory conception of ways of knowing shouldn't embed an entailing conception of explanation, these considerations also help us to see why what Cassam (p. 339) calls an *entailment view* of ways of knowing is implausible. On such a view

' ϕ -ing that p is a way of knowing that p if and only if ' S ϕ s that p ' entails ' S knows that p ' (p. 339). Such a view is hopeless for the reasons given above: seeing the lighter, reading that Quine was born in Akron, and the like, don't, on the entailment view, count as ways of knowing, which is implausible, yet knowing that p does, which is absurd. When it comes to understanding ways of knowing, the explanatory conception insists that what is important is explanation, not entailment.

2.2.2 Cassam and Williamson on Ways of Knowing

Cassam differentiates his view of ways of knowing from the view put forward in Williamson (2000). Williamson's view of ways of knowing emerges in his discussion of a proposal he makes about knowledge, namely, that 'knowing is the most general factive stative attitude, that which one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to it at all' (p. 34). But what is a "factive stative attitude"? Williamson explains this notion in the following way:

A propositional attitude is factive if and only if, necessarily, one has it only to truths [e.g., seeing that p].... Not all factive attitudes constitute states; forgetting is a process. Call those attitudes which constitute states *stative* (p. 34).

So ϕ -ing that p is a factive stative attitude to p if and only if ϕ -ing that p is a propositional attitude which constitutes a state, and which is such that necessarily, if S ϕ s that p , then p . Moreover, this analysis applies only to those ϕ s which are semantically unanalyzable—a ϕ which is 'not synonymous with any complex expression whose meaning is composed of the meanings of its parts' (p. 34). This means that 'believes truly' doesn't count as a factive stative attitude for Williamson, since it is semantically analyzable.

But what has this got to do with ways of knowing? Well, in explicating the proposal, in the following passage, Williamson introduces an idea about ways of knowing:

To picture the proposal, compare the state of knowing with the property of being coloured, the colour property which

something has if it has any colour property at all. If something is coloured, then it has a more specific colour property; it is red or green or... Although that specific colour may happen to lack a name in our language, we could always introduce such a name, perhaps pointing to the thing as a paradigm. We may say that being coloured is being red or green or..., if the list is understood as open-ended, and the concept *is coloured* is not identified with the disjunctive concept. One can grasp the concept *is coloured* without grasping the concept *is green*, therefore without grasping the disjunctive concept. Similarly, if one knows that A, then there is a specific way in which one knows; one can see or remember or ... that A. Although that specific way may happen to lack a name in our language, we could always introduce such a name, perhaps pointing to the case as a paradigm. We may say that knowing that A is seeing or remembering or ... that A, if the list is understood as open-ended, and the concept *knows* is not identified with the disjunctive concept. One can grasp the concept *knows* without grasping the concept *sees*, therefore without grasping the disjunctive concept (p. 34).

Cassam (2007b) takes this passage as a focal point in his discussion of Williamson's view of ways of knowing (pp. 347–351). I want to discuss how Cassam understands this passage, and how he compares Williamson's view of ways of knowing to his own.

As Cassam notes what Williamson suggests in this passage is that 'seeing that *p*' is a 'way' of knowing in something like the sense in which red is a 'way' of being coloured' (p. 348). In general, the passage suggests that specific ways of knowing are related to knowing in a similar way to how specific ways of being coloured are related to being coloured. This has the consequence that ways of knowing must entail knowledge, as Cassam explains

Being red wouldn't count as a way of being coloured if it were not the case that 'X is red' entails 'S is coloured'. By the same token, ϕ -ing that *P* wouldn't count as what Williamson calls a

‘way of knowing’ that P if it were not the case that ‘ S ϕ s that P ’ entails ‘ S knows that P ’ (p. 348).

Yet as we have seen, on the explanatory conception, ϕ -ing can be a way of knowing even if it doesn’t entail knowledge. So in this respect Williamson’s conception of ways of knowing is more restrictive than Cassam’s is. And as Cassam goes on to note Williamson’s view is more restrictive in two further ways (p. 349). First, on Williamson view ways of knowing must be propositional attitudes, and second, they must be states. As we’ve seen, on the explanatory conception ways of knowing need not be propositional attitudes. Seeing the lighter can be a way of knowing that it is under the desk, but it isn’t a propositional attitude. And Cassam also thinks that we shouldn’t restrict ways of knowing to states:

‘By proving it’ or ‘By working it out’ will be acceptable answers to ‘How do you know that P ?’ even though ‘prove’ and ‘work out’ aren’t stative. Proving that P can be a way of knowing that P , at least as far as the explanatory conception is concerned (p. 349).

According to Cassam, we have an explanatory conception of ways of knowing, and Williamson’s conception of ways of knowing. These are, as Cassam puts it, ‘rival conceptions’ of ways of knowing (p. 339). The question, then, is which conception looks more plausible? Cassam thinks that the explanatory conception is more plausible. For in being *less* restrictive it allows us to count states or processes as ways of knowing which we intuitively think are ways of knowing, but which Williamson’s account of ways of knowing, in being *more* restrictive, can’t count as ways of knowing. Unlike on Williamson’s conception, the explanatory conception doesn’t exclude processes from being ways of knowing (e.g., working something out), nor does it exclude non-propositional mental states (e.g., seeing the lighter), nor does it exclude states or processes which don’t entail knowledge (e.g., seeing the lighter, reading that Quine was born in Akron). That it *doesn’t* exclude such states or processes is a point in favour of the explanatory conception over Williamson’s conception.

But is this way of understanding Williamson's view the best way to understand it? As we've seen, Cassam thinks that his own explanatory account of the phenomenon of ways of knowing is preferable to what he takes to be Williamson's account of that same phenomenon. But we should also note that by Cassam's lights, there is a more severe criticism of Williamson's account. At one point Cassam says

This is not to deny that reading that P can be a way of knowing that P . Any sane account of ways of knowing had better accept that, for example, it is possible for one to know that Quine was born in Akron by reading his autobiography (p. 344).

Now since on Cassam's understanding of Williamson's view, reading that p doesn't count as a way of knowing—since reading that p is not a factive stative attitude to p —Williamson's account of ways of knowing is, by implication of what Cassam says in the above passage, not sane. So the situation we find ourselves in is that if we interpret Williamson as putting forward an account of the phenomenon that Cassam is also trying to account for, the result is not just that Williamson's account is less plausible than the explanatory account, but it is not even a sane account. Now surely, if we want to be charitable, we should at least consider the possibility that Williamson is not putting forward an "insane" account of a phenomenon.

With respect to this goal, one thing to consider, it seems to me, is whether Cassam and Williamson really are trying to give competing accounts of the *same* phenomenon. Is Williamson's account of 'specific ways of knowing' even *supposed* to be an account of the phenomenon—ways of knowing—that Cassam is interested in? The labels Cassam and Williamson use are the same, but is it the same phenomenon they are interested in? If not, then taking it to be an account of a phenomenon it is not supposed to be an account of may well yield a result which is not sane. But that would be no criticism of Williamson's account *properly understood*.

It is not obvious to me that Cassam and Williamson are interested in the same phenomenon. The fact that both Cassam and Williamson use the label 'ways of knowing' is not at all decisive here. For Williamson

drops the label in his subsequent more substantive discussion of factive stative attitudes (pp. 34–41). And in any case his use of ‘specific ways of knowing’ terminology is not essential to the formulation of his claims in the passage where that phrase does occur. Williamson also puts things in this way:

While belief aims at knowledge, various mental processes aim at more specific factive mental states. Perception aims at perceiving that something is so; memory aims at remembering that something is so. Since knowing is the most general factive mental state, all such processes aim at kinds of knowledge. (p. 48).

Here Williamson puts things in terms of ‘specific factive mental states’, and ‘kinds of knowledge’. He might also put things in terms of specific realizations of knowledge. And what Cassam says with his use of the expression ‘ways of knowing’ could be faithfully reformulated in the terminology of ‘means of knowing’ (in other work Cassam uses this terminology instead, see, e.g., Cassam (2007a, 2009a)).

I may be wrong, but I think the idea that Cassam and Williamson are interested in the same phenomenon needs some motivation. I will try to bring this out by describing how we might consistently think that there are specific ways of knowing in Williamson’s sense, accounted for in Williamson’s way, *and* ways of knowing in Cassam’s sense, accounted for in Cassam’s way (with the explanatory conception).

It seems to me that Williamson is putting forward two central ideas, (1) states of knowledge—of knowing that p —always have more specific realizations (just like the property of being coloured is, whenever it is instantiated, always determined by some more specific colour property, such as being red, or being green), and (2) the more specific realizations of knowledge are factive stative attitudes. So the sense in which some factive stative attitudes count as ‘specific ways of knowing’ for Williamson is that they are specific realizations of knowing that p . This is similar to how seeing x , hearing x , and so on, count as *ways of perceiving* x —they are specific realizations of perceiving x . Suppose then that I know that the lemon before me is yellow. For Williamson, applying (1) and (2), this means that

my state of knowledge is realized in a more specific way, and what constitutes this realization is that I ϕ that the lemon before me is yellow, for some ϕ which is a more specific factive stative attitude to the relevant proposition—more specific, that is, than knowing that the lemon before me is yellow ('a more specific factive mental state' than knowledge, as Williamson says at p. 48).

Let's develop the case a bit more. Suppose then that we consider *how* I know that the lemon before me is yellow. And suppose that a correct, and satisfactory answer to this question is that I can *see the lemon*. In perfectly legitimate terms, the *way I know* that the lemon before me is yellow is by seeing the lemon. Let's also add to this story an account: the reason that my seeing the lemon counts as a way of knowing is that it satisfactorily *explains how* I know. At this stage we have invoked a way of knowing in Cassam's *sense*, in the sense in which Cassam understands that phenomenon. Moreover, we have added Cassam's *account* of the phenomenon to the mix.

Now, the crucial question is, in introducing these details have we introduced an inconsistency? It is just not obvious that we have. Williamson can say that I know that the lemon before me is yellow by seeing the lemon. In this sense he can admit that seeing the lemon is my way of knowing. But he will add to this that my knowledge must have a more specific realization, in the form of some factive stative attitude more specific than knowledge, that is, it must be knowledge had in some more 'specific way'.

There are two notions of 'ways of knowing' in play here, and to avoid ambiguity we can put things like this: there is the means by which I know—seeing the lemon—and then there is the specific realization of my knowledge—for Williamson, some factive state of the form ϕ -ing that the lemon before me is yellow. The means by which I know is the 'way of knowing' in Cassam's sense, and we are, for all we've said here, free to give an explanatory account of that. And the specific realization of my knowledge is the 'way of knowing' in Williamson's sense, and we are, for all we've said here, free to give an account of that in Williamson's terms, that is, in terms of factive stative attitudes.

In the case described the specific realization of my knowledge might be a matter of *seeing that the lemon before me is yellow*. Accordingly, I see the

lemon, and the conditions are such that, in seeing the lemon I get into the state of seeing *that* the lemon before me is yellow. This factive stative attitude is—on Williamson’s account—a specific realization of knowing that the lemon before me is yellow. Alternatively, it might be that seeing the lemon gives rise to a different specific factive stative attitude, one which, perhaps, we have no natural language expression for. All Williamson is committed to is that there is *some such* factive stative attitude which constitutes a specific realization of knowing that the lemon before me is yellow. And this, on the way I’ve been presenting things, doesn’t seem to be inconsistent with admitting that there are also ways of knowing in Cassam’s sense—what we can call means of knowing—which are accounted for in terms of Cassam’s explanatory conception.

Here is another case. Suppose I know that there is a tube strike going on. Now consider *how* I know this. And suppose that a correct, and satisfactory answer to this question is that *the transport official told me that there is a tube strike going on*. That the official told me that there is a tube strike going on is my way of knowing that there is a tube strike going on. Let’s also add to this story an account: the reason that the official’s telling me that there is a tube strike going on is a way of knowing that there is a tube strike going on is that it—that testimony—satisfactorily *explains how* I know. At this stage we have invoked a way of knowing in Cassam’s *sense*. Moreover, we have added Cassam’s *account* of the phenomenon to the mix.

Again, the crucial question is, is there anything here which is inconsistent with what Williamson is committed to? And again, it is not obvious that there is. Williamson can say that I know that there is a tube strike going on by being told that there is a tube strike going on. In this sense he can admit that being told that there is a tube strike going on is a way of knowing. But he will add to this that my knowledge must have a more specific realization, in the form of some factive stative attitude more specific than knowledge, that is, it must be knowledge had in some more ‘specific way’.

There are two notions of ‘ways of knowing’ in play here, and to avoid ambiguity we can put things like this: there is the means by which I know—being told that there is a tube strike going on—and then there is the specific realization of my knowledge—for Williamson, some factive

state of the form ϕ -ing that there is a tube strike going on. The means by which I know is the ‘way of knowing’ in Cassam’s sense, and we are, for all we’ve said here, free to give an explanatory account of that. And the specific realization of my knowledge is the ‘way of knowing’ in Williamson’s sense, and we are, for all we’ve said here, free to give an account of that in Williamson’s terms, that is, in terms of factive stative attitudes.

In the case currently under discussion, the specific realization of my knowledge, on Williamson’s account, can’t be my being *told* that there is a tube strike going on. Since being told that p is, obviously, not *factive* (the same goes for reading that p). But all Williamson needs to say is that when I know that p by being told that p , there is *some such* factive stative attitude which constitutes a specific realization of knowing that p . It is, admittedly, difficult to say what specific state that might be in this sort of case. However, Williamson admits that a ‘specific way’, which constitutes a realization of knowledge, ‘may lack a name in our language’ (p. 34). So it is open for him to say that the difficulty we have of stating what the specific realization of knowing that p is, when such knowledge is acquired by means of being told that p , just indicates that such specific realizations lack a name in our language.

Incidentally, McDowell (1993) says that ‘hearing from someone that things are thus and so is like seeing that things are thus and so in being a “guaranteeing” informational state’ (p. 434, fn 30). McDowell is trying to insist that the justificational basis for knowledge acquired on the basis of testimony is something which guarantees the truth of what is known. But it is, to my ear, a stretch of ordinary language to suppose that we can capture this factive justificational basis in terms of ‘hearing from someone that things are thus and so’, for this locution doesn’t strike me as being factive. Suppose I hear from Jones that the Prime Minister has resigned. Is it incoherent or contradictory, given this, to suppose also that it is not true that the Prime Minister has resigned? (Like in the case of: I know that the Prime Minister has resigned, but he hasn’t resigned?) Suppose that the Prime Minister has not resigned, it strikes me that one could still hear from Jones that he has resigned, it’s just that Jones got it wrong. But as in the case of Williamson, the substance of McDowell’s proposal is unaffected by this point. For McDowell’s proposal doesn’t require that factive justificational bases for knowledge have names in natural language,

just as Williamson's proposal doesn't require that specific realizations of knowledge have names in natural language. (There is more on McDowell's epistemology in Part II).

We can also admit that in some cases where *S* knows that *p*, what counts as *S*'s way of knowing—in Cassam's sense, and given Cassam's account—is also what constitutes the specific realization of *S*'s knowledge—given Williamson's account of that. For instance, suppose that *S* knows that she locked the door when she left the house because she can remember that she locked the door when she left the house. Suppose this is a matter of *S*'s remembering that she locked the door when she left *explaining how* she knows that she locked the door when she left the house. To say that *S* knows that *p* because she can remember that *p*, is to give a satisfactory explanation of how *S* knows in the sense that it is to explain how *S* retains her knowledge in terms of a specific faculty, memory, whose function (or a function which it has) is that of knowledge retention. It is consistent with this that *S*'s remembering that she locked the door when she left the house is also the specific way in which *S* knows that she locked the door when she left the house in *Williamson's* sense. That is, it is consistent with this that *S*'s remembering that she locked the door when she left the house is what constitutes the specific realization of *S*'s knowledge that she locked the door when she left the house.

I have been trying to suggest that there is an alternative way of construing Williamson's remarks, on which he is not putting forward a rival (and by Cassam's lights insane) account of ways, *means*, of knowing. Instead he is putting forward an account of the nature of specific realizations of knowledge. I have tried to suggest that the following claims are consistent: (1) states of knowledge—of knowing that *p*—always have more specific realizations, (2) the more specific realizations of knowledge are factive stative attitudes, (3) there are ways of knowing in Cassam's sense, and (4) those ways of knowing—what I prefer to call means of knowing—can be accounted for, *qua* means of knowing, in terms of Cassam's explanatory conception. The potential for confusion arises not least because the distinct phenomena are related: a way of knowing in one sense can give rise to a way of knowing in the other sense. But also the potential for confusion arises because the label 'ways of knowing' can

apply, legitimately, to each phenomenon, means of knowing, and realizations of knowledge.

I am *not* claiming that (1) and (2) are true—which is tantamount to endorsing the Williamsonian account of knowledge. We may well want to reject these claims, the point is just that this strikes me as being independent of the issue of how to account for means of knowing—ways of knowing in Cassam’s sense. (For further discussion of (1) and (2), see Cassam (2007b), pp. 349–350, and for more general discussion on Williamson’s account of knowledge see Cassam (2009a) and other essays in Pritchard and Greenough (2009)).

Still, we might, in light of what has been said, put pressure on Williamson’s position in the following way. Williamson tries to motivate his view by pointing out that one can always ask after one’s way of knowing when one knows that p . Candidate answers are remembering that p , seeing that p , and so on. This is supposed to support the idea that such states are realizations of knowing that p . But if we typically take such answers as addressing the question that Cassam is interested in (namely, the question of how S knows that p ?), then they give no evidence that we think of remembering that p , and the like, as specifications of a generic state of knowledge, rather than as explanations of how we come to be in or manage to sustain states of knowing. In other words, they give no evidence that we think of the states Williamson is interested in as ways of knowing in his sense, as opposed to ways of knowing in Cassam’s sense—*means of knowing*.

I want to return now to the main theme of this Chapter. How are we to understand, more precisely, our pre-theoretic commitment to the idea that *visual perception* is a way, or as I’ll now say, means of knowing?

2.3 The Explanatory *Conception* and Visual Perception

In this thesis so far I have been talking about seeing or visual perception, and I have understood this in terms of seeing x (thing seeing). I have claimed that one of our pre-theoretic commitments regarding visual per-

ception is that it is a means of knowing. In this section I will outline an *explanatory conception* of visual perception as a means of knowing, which is an application of Cassam's explanatory conception discussed above.

To say that visual perception is a means of knowing is to say that there is a function or role (being a means by which some *S* knows that *p*) which visual perception *can* perform. This function is realized on an occasion just in case *S* knows that *p* by visual means. So the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing is *not* the idea that whenever *S* sees *x* there is some knowledge *S* has by visual means. Whether or not this is true, it is not part of the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing. That idea is consistent with the claim that visual perception is only *conditionally* knowledge giving. There is more on this in section (2.4) below.

The idea that visual perception is a means of knowing, understood in this way, has to involve a restriction to a certain range of propositions. For we don't think that absolutely any proposition can be known by means of visual perception. If there are unknowable propositions, then, *a fortiori*, there are propositions which can't be known by visual means. But even within the category of knowable propositions we don't have to think that for any such *p* one can know that *p* by *visual* means. We can be more cautious and suppose that to say that visual perception is a means of knowing is to say that there is a function or role (being a means by which some *S* knows that *p*), which visual perception can perform relative to a *restricted range* of propositions, even knowable propositions. (See here also Cassam (2007b), p. 341).

How might we conceive, then, of the function visual perception has of being a means of knowing? Cassam (2008) poses the question and indicates what his answer to it is in this way:

If simple seeing [what I'm calling visual perception] is not knowledge-entailing, and so not a form of knowing, in what sense can it still have a knowledge-giving role? The best way of answering this question is to think about the role of this kind of seeing in explaining how we know some of the things we know about the world around us (p. 39).

In Cassam's view, which is hinted at here, we should apply the explanatory conception of means of knowing to visual perception. By doing so we

get the following. Seeing x is a means of knowing just if we can satisfactorily explain how S knows that p (for a restricted range of propositions) by pointing out that S sees x . In any particular case, S 's seeing x is S 's means of knowing that p just if, in that case, S 's seeing x is what explains how S knows that p . The function visual perception has of being a means of knowing, on this conception, amounts to it having a knowledge explaining role.

It is consistent with this account of how visual perception is a means of knowing that we can give visual perceptual explanations of knowledge in terms of seeing that p . Suppose I ask you how you know that your copy of Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* is on your desk. (That is, I ask you to explain how you know this). You might answer (explain) by saying 'I can see it [the book]' but also by saying 'I can see that it is on the desk'. You know that the book is on the desk by visual means. You can give expression to this in different ways. In the first case you specify the visual means by describing it in non-propositional terms (with an expression of the form ' $S \phi s x$ '), and in the second case you specify the visual means by describing it in propositional terms (with an expression of the form ' $S \phi s$ that p ').

To employ the terminology introduced in the previous Chapter, we can say that visual perceptual explanations of knowledge can be given by employing the (non-propositional) *basic perceptual sense* of 'see', but also by employing the (propositional) *epistemic perceptual sense* of 'see'. Now since there are, obviously, semantic differences between these senses there are semantic differences between explanations of knowledge given in terms of the basic perceptual sense of 'see' on the one hand, and the epistemic perceptual sense of 'see' on the other. I'll note two differences. First, explanations given in non-propositional (basic perceptual) terms are, semantically, more specific than explanations given in propositional (epistemic perceptual) terms. This is because ascriptions of visual perception which employ the basic perceptual 'see' involve, as part of their meaning, a specification of a type of state of visual perception, whereas ascriptions of visual perception which involve the epistemic perceptual sense of 'see' don't (as we observed towards the end of section (1.2.2) above).

For example, in explaining how I know that my copy of *Naming and Necessity* is on the desk in terms of seeing *it*—the book, the copy—what

I say involves a specification of a type of visual perceptual state, as the means of knowing. Namely, a state which has *it* (the book) as an object. But in saying that I can see *that* the book is on the desk, the semantic content I express doesn't involve a specification of a type of visual perceptual state (such a statement may be true partly in virtue of the fact that I see the book, but not necessarily, maybe it is true partly because I see the shadow of the book in such a way that it is evident that the book is on the desk). So, if I explain my knowledge that the book is on the desk by saying that I can see that it is on the desk, I don't, semantically, say which type of visual perceptual state the knowledge is based on (though if certain contextual conditions are satisfied I might *convey* precisely which type of visual perceptual state grounds the knowledge).

Despite this lack of specificity, citing such epistemic perceptual states can still provide perfectly good explanations for knowledge. Such explanations are only *relatively* unspecific (they are less specific than basic perceptual explanations). For in saying that *S* sees that *p*, in an attempt to explain how *S* knows that *p*, one states that *S* *sees*, and that *S*'s seeing is the source of their knowledge—as opposed to some other source. As Cassam (2009b) puts it

knowing that P by seeing that P is different from, say, knowing that P by hearing or by being told that P. 'S can see that P' is an informative answer to the question 'How does S know that P?' at least to the extent that it tells us the *specific* way in which S knows that P (p. 580).

That is, such explanations are relatively specific in that they invoke seeing as opposed to some other source. And because of this they can be informative or good explanations—for one who is ignorant about how *S* knows that *p*, it clearly helps them to resolve their ignorance, to an extent, to be told that *S* knows that *p* by *seeing* (as opposed to hearing, or testimony, or whatever).

A second semantic difference between explanations of knowledge given in terms of the basic perceptual 'see' and those given in terms of the epistemic perceptual 'see' is the following. Given the semantics of '*S* sees that *p*' sentences, which involve the epistemic perceptual sense of 'see', some explanations of knowledge given in terms of the

epistemic perceptual ‘see’ are entailing explanations. We find this where the content of the relevant ‘*S* sees that...’ statement (the explanans statement) is the same as the content of the relevant ‘*S* knows that...’ statement (the explanandum statement). So, if I explain how I know that the book is on the desk by appeal to the fact that I can see that the book is on the desk, I give an entailing explanation, for, where ‘see’ is the epistemic perceptual ‘see’, ‘*S* sees that *p*’ entails ‘*S* knows that *p*’ (as observed in section (1.2.2) above).

If the content involved in the explanans statement doesn’t include the content involved in the explanandum statement, we don’t necessarily get an entailing explanation. For instance, to adapt an example from Dretske (1969), discussed at the end of section (1.2.2) above, I might explain how I know that the President is ill by saying that I can see that the newspapers say that the President is ill. But ‘*S* sees that the newspapers say that the President is ill’ doesn’t entail ‘*S* knows that the President is ill’ (the former sentence doesn’t even entail ‘the President is ill’).

So, some, but only *some*, explanations of knowledge given in terms of the epistemic perceptual ‘see’ are entailing explanations. The relevant semantic contrast is that no such explanations given in terms of the basic perceptual ‘see’ are entailing explanations (see section (1.4)). I can explain my knowledge that the book is on the desk in terms of the fact that I see the book, but ‘*S* sees the book’ doesn’t entail ‘*S* knows that the book is on the desk’.

Is it in some sense *because* ‘*S* sees that the lemon before her is yellow’ entails ‘*S* knows that the lemon’ that explanations of how *S* knows that the lemon before her is yellow in terms of the fact that she can see that the lemon before her is yellow are explanatory? Is the fact of entailment relevant to the fact of explanation? It doesn’t seem so. For in explaining *S*’s knowledge in terms of her seeing *that* the lemon before her is yellow, we are still appealing, in our explanation, to *thing* seeing. That is to say, the explanatory work is being done by some state or episode of thing seeing—the type of which isn’t specified in the explanation—which in fact doesn’t entail the knowledge. In saying that *S* knows that the lemon before her is yellow because they can see that it is, one is saying that *S* knows that the lemon before her is yellow because there is some state or episode of visual perception, *v*, of *S*’s—that is, a state or episode in

which S sees some x , a state of *thing seeing*—which is such that S knows that p by means of v (v might be, e.g., S 's seeing the lemon). So although one can couch a visual perceptual explanation of knowledge in terms of seeing that p , what ultimately explains the knowledge, and what one puts forward as what explains the knowledge, is a state of things seeing (*some* state or other). This suggests that even though explanations of knowing that p in terms of seeing that p are entailing, this fact of entailment is irrelevant to their explanatory force.

I will ignore these differences between propositional and non-propositional visual perceptual explanations of knowledge. What matters to us here is just what such explanations have in common: the fact that they are explanations of knowledge in terms of visual perception (thing seeing). Shortly I will state what the explanatory characterization of our pre-theoretic idea of visual perception's epistemic significance amounts to. But first I want to make some remarks on the structure of visual perceptual explanations of knowledge, from the perspective of the explanatory conception of visual perception as a means of knowing.

2.4 Explanations and Enabling Conditions

Consider seeing a lemon. Suppose that S sees a lemon, she gets a good look at it, her eyesight is functioning well, there is good daylight, she has no reasons to doubt her senses, or to think that her environment contains fake objects, and so on. S is capable of judgements involving the concept *lemon*, and various other concepts. In conditions such as these, S can come to know that the lemon before her is yellow by seeing the lemon (in *such* conditions her seeing the lemon explains her knowledge). In *other* conditions things might be different, though S still sees the lemon. For instance, in other conditions suppose S sees the lemon but it looks exactly like a pear. In these conditions her seeing the lemon might not lead to the knowledge that the lemon before her is yellow if she mistakes it for a pear.

What this shows is that object seeing is, as Cassam (2008) puts it, 'conditionally knowledge-giving' (p. 41). Visual perception explains knowledge in some conditions, but not others (in the language of the previous sections, visual perceptual explanations of knowledge are not entailing

explanations). We can frame this in terms of the idea that visual perception explains knowledge only when certain *enabling conditions* are satisfied. I now want to discuss the notion of an enabling condition, as I understand it, and discuss some particular enabling conditions relevant to visual perceptual explanations of knowledge.

Here is how, at a very general and abstract level, I am understanding the notion of an enabling condition in contexts of explanation. Suppose that *A* explains *B*. Now, *C* is an enabling condition on *A*'s explaining *B* just in case *C* is part of what explains the fact that (or explains how or why) *A* explains *B*. In this structure we have two levels. On the first level we have *B*, this is an explanandum, and it is explained by *A* (the explanans for *B*). At the second level, it is not *B* which is the explanandum, nor is it *A* which is the explanans, it is rather a fact of the form: *A* explains *B* which is the explanandum, and among the explanans for a fact of this form are *C* conditions—enabling conditions. Hopefully things will become more clear and less abstract as the discussion proceeds.

Suppose that *S* knows that *p* by visual means. As I understand things, this already gives us one level of explanation, namely: *S*'s seeing *x* explains how *S* knows that *p*. A fact of this form can obtain only if certain enabling conditions are satisfied. But this then gives us another level of explanation. These enabling conditions are not part of what explains how *S* knows that *p*. They are, instead, part of what explains *S*'s knowing that *p* by visual means. We can say, then, that such enabling conditions are at least *explanatorily relevant* to how *S* knows that *p*. But we are here exploiting a distinction between *that which explains* on the one hand, and features which are *explanatorily relevant to* that which explains on the other. This is to exploit, for the purposes of understanding visual perceptual explanations of knowledge, a 'general distinction between what plays a certain role and what is required for it to play that role; the latter features may not play that role themselves' (Dancy 2004, p. 51).

For instance, in a causal explanation of why a particular effect occurred we will have to mention the *causes* of the effect. But there are other features which whilst not themselves causes are, in some sense, explanatorily or causally *relevant*. For instance, the laws of nature can be explanatorily relevant to why some particular effect occurred without being *causes*. As Dancy says

A full causal explanation of an event might be thought of as one that specifies a sufficient set of events as causes. Now what about the laws governing the whole transaction? It looks as if they are not a proper part of this explanation at all, because it is a specification of a sufficient set of events, and no law is an event. The role of the laws lies elsewhere. They are the conditions required for those events to necessitate this one, and thereby they stand as enabling conditions for the explanation rather than as a proper part of it (p. 46).

In Dancy's example the first order level of explanation takes some caused event e as an explanandum. The explanatory question is a question about why e occurred, a question which concerns just the causes of e . The explanation is given in terms of c , we say that c caused e , where c is a set of events sufficient for the occurrence of e . The laws of nature we think are explanatorily *relevant* here, but not because they are among the causes of e . We don't build them into the explanans for our explanation of why e occurred—for that makes reference *just* to the causes of e . To account for the explanatory relevance of the laws of nature in this sort of case we go to the second level of explanation and state that part of what explains the fact of the form: c caused e , is that the laws of nature are as they are. Facts about the laws of nature are enabling conditions on the Dancy inspired conception of enabling conditions I am operating with here.

The general point is that there are ways of being explanatorily *relevant* to the explanation of some explanandum aside from being *that which explains*—or, a proper part of *the explanation* for—the explanandum. Enabling conditions are explanatorily relevant to an explanandum not by being part of what explains the explanandum, but by being part of what explains the *explanation of* the explanandum—they operate at the second level of explanation.

So, when S knows that p we can distinguish two explanatory questions. First, questions of the form: how does S know that p ? In response to such questions we specify some means of knowing. That is, in response to such a question we say: because S ϕ s __. This gives a *complete* explanation of how S knows in the sense that the explanans is complete. Such an explanation, that is, doesn't need anything further in the specification of

what it is that explains how S knows that p . It is ϕ -ing which explains how S knows, nothing else, nothing more. But ϕ -ing provides such a complete explanation only under certain conditions. This brings us to the second of the explanatory questions: what is the explanation for S 's knowing that p by ϕ -ing? Part of the answer to such a question will state that certain conditions are satisfied. That is, C is an enabling condition on S knowing that p by ϕ -ing, just if C is part of the explanation for S 's knowing that p by ϕ -ing. So, enabling conditions on visual perception being a means of knowing (knowledge explaining) are conditions which help explain facts of the form: S knows that p by visual means.

Some enabling conditions on explanations of knowledge will be necessary conditions on such explanations. That is, they will be conditions which must obtain if any fact of the form: S knows that p by ϕ -ing obtains. But it is important to bear in mind that not all such necessary conditions will be enabling conditions. For, as I've been suggesting in this section so far, there is something *explanatory* about enabling conditions. Enabling conditions must contribute to second level explanations (in explanations of knowledge, they must be part of what explains facts of the form: S knows that p by ϕ -ing $_$). This means that not any old necessary condition on ϕ -ing being a means of knowing will count as an enabling condition. For, not every such necessary condition is such that if it is satisfied it will be part of what *explains* how S knows that p by ϕ -ing. For instance, that $2 + 2 = 4$ is a necessary condition on ϕ -ing being a means of knowing (it is necessarily true, thus it must obtain if any fact of the general form: S knows that p by ϕ -ing $_$ obtains). But now suppose that on a particular occasion S knows that p by ϕ -ing. Is the fact that $2 + 2 = 4$ part of what *explains how* S knows that p by ϕ -ing on that occasion? Should we count it as among the enabling facts for that particular fact? Intuitively not. Thus, we shouldn't maintain that any old necessary condition on ϕ -ing being a means of knowing is an enabling condition. *Some* of them are—the explanatory ones.

Now let's consider enabling conditions on visual perceptual explanations of knowledge, and let's focus on those that are necessary conditions. We can distinguish two varieties of such conditions. First, there are *global enabling conditions*. C is a global enabling condition on S 's knowing that p by ϕ -ing, just in case for any ϕ , whenever S knows that p by ϕ -ing, the

satisfaction of C (is part of what) explains how S knows that p by ϕ -ing. Thus, global enabling conditions are explanatory necessary conditions on knowing by *any* means whatsoever. Second, there are *local enabling conditions*. C is a local enabling condition on S 's knowing that p by ϕ -ing, just in case, for some ϕ , whenever S knows that p by ϕ -ing, the satisfaction of C (is part of what) explains how S knows that p by ϕ -ing. Thus, local enabling conditions are explanatory necessary conditions on knowing by just *some* means.

Take a particular fact of the form: S knows that p by ϕ -ing (e.g., I know that the lemon before me is yellow because I can see the lemon). Among the facts which explain S 's knowing that p by ϕ -ing are some of the (satisfied) necessary conditions on knowing by ϕ -ing (on ϕ -ing being a means of knowing). That is, satisfied global and local enabling conditions on knowing by ϕ -ing. (I borrow the terms 'global' and 'local' in this context from McKeever and Ridge (2006, p. 50)).

From what we have said thus far we can appreciate, in an abstract way, that even if visual perception is present on a given occasion it might not explain knowledge. For if the relevant global and local enabling conditions aren't satisfied on that occasion, then visual perception won't function as a means of knowing—since the relevant local enabling conditions are necessary for *visual perception* to function in that way, and the global ones are necessary for *any means* to function in that way. I'll now discuss some examples.

Plausibly it is constitutive of S 's knowing that p that S possesses the concepts which compose (or which characterize) the proposition p . Knowing that p is an attitude to p which requires that S grasps that p , and this, we can suppose, constitutively involves possession of the concepts associated with p (see Williamson (2000), p. 36). If I know that the lemon before me is yellow I must have the kind concept LEMON, and the colour concept, YELLOW, among other concepts. Thus, possessing concepts associated with p is a necessary condition on knowing that p , and thus a necessary condition on knowing that p by any means.

It doesn't follow from the fact that possessing concepts associated with p is a necessary condition on knowing that p by any means that this is an *enabling* condition on knowing that p by any means. However, it

does seem to be an enabling condition, since it seems that it will be explanatorily relevant to *S*'s knowing that *p*. Intuitively, that is, possessing the relevant concepts is not *merely* a necessary condition on knowing that *p* by any means, but a *global enabling* condition. For, plausibly, that *S* possesses the concepts associated with *p* will be part of what explains any fact of the form: *S* knows that *p* by ϕ -ing. It seems that a proper part of the explanation of my knowing that there is a lemon before me, by any means whatsoever, will have to make reference to the conditions I satisfy as a knower, such as the fact that I can grasp the proposition that there is a lemon before me, and thus that I possess the concepts required for that. (Cassam (2009b), p. 385, for instance, thinks of concept possession as an enabling condition).

Possessing the concepts associated with *p* is thus an enabling condition on knowing that *p* by *visual means*. Suppose that *S* doesn't know that the lemon before her is yellow because she doesn't have the concept LEMON (perhaps she is an infant in arms, or has just lead a lemonless life, that is, has never encountered lemons, or learned about them, or had any opportunity to acquire the concept). Still, it seems, *S* might *see* the lemon before her. In these circumstances, obviously, *S*'s seeing the lemon will not explain how *S* knows that the lemon before her is yellow—there is no such knowledge to explain. This is because an enabling condition—the concept possession global enabling condition—on *S*'s knowing that *p* by visual means is not satisfied.

In circumstances where this enabling condition *is* satisfied, things may be different (as long as other enabling conditions are also satisfied). For instance, if *S* has the concept LEMON, and other relevant concepts, she may well, upon seeing the lemon, come to know that the lemon before her is yellow. In this case what explains how *S* knows that the lemon before her is yellow is her seeing the lemon. And part of what explain's *S*'s knowing that the lemon before her is yellow by seeing the lemon is that the concept possession global enabling condition is satisfied.

An example of a *local* enabling condition comes from Burge (1993). The example is an example of a necessary condition on coming to know specifically by means of *reasoning*, or in Burge's terms, it is a 'background condition' on the 'proper functioning' of reasoning. It is a local enabling condition for it is part of what explains facts of the form: *r* explains how

S knows that p —where r is some instance of properly functioning reasoning. Here is Burge’s example:

In a deduction, reasoning processes’ working properly depends on memory’s preserving the results of previous reasoning. But memory’s preserving such results does not add to the justificational force of the reasoning.... Memory failures that cause demonstrations to fail are failures of background conditions necessary to the proper function of reasoning.... Even in empirical reasoning, memory has a purely preservative function that does not contribute to the force of the justification, but simply helps assure the proper working of other cognitive capacities over time. (Burge 1993, pp. 463–464).

In such cases, memory’s preserving results doesn’t explain how S knows that p . It is rather part of the explanation of how S knows that p *by reasoning*. Burge’s case also serves as a reminder of some of the ways in which we, intuitively, carve up explanatory space. For even though we have no problem with the idea of memory providing one with grounds for knowledge, intuitively, that is *not* the explanatory role it plays when it is involved in the proper functioning of reasoning (it doesn’t, as Burge puts it, contribute ‘justificational force’). (I give an example of a local enabling condition on visual perception below).

We have considered two enabling conditions so far, the global enabling condition of concept possession, and the enabling condition of preservative memory, local to the proper functioning of reasoning. The conditions we have considered are conditions on S *knowing by* some means ϕ -ing, but not on the mere presence of ϕ -ing. Concept possession is arguably not a condition on the mere presence of, at least, a range of means of knowing (e.g., perceptual means—though this is controversial, as we’ll see in the discussion of McDowell’s view of perception in Chapter 4). And, arguably, the preservation of results in memory is not a condition on reasoning *per se*, but its *proper functioning*. Such enabling conditions are what Cassam (2007a, p. 16) calls *type B* enabling conditions. But there are also what Cassam calls *type A* enabling conditions. These are enabling

conditions on the very presence of some means of knowing ϕ -ing. Cassam suggests that there is likely to be some overlap here—some of the enabling conditions on the presence of ϕ -ing will also be enabling conditions on ϕ -ing being a means of knowing (p. 46).

When it comes to visual perception, some physiological conditions, for instance, will count as type *A* enabling conditions, since some such conditions are explanatorily necessary conditions on the presence of visual perception. For instance, conditions which concern the proper functioning of a *visual system* (that is, a specific sort of neurophysiological or artificial system responsible for visual functions, including visual perception). The satisfaction of such conditions is, plausibly, (at least physically or causally) necessary for there to be visual perception at all. It is also explanatory of the presence of visual perception (part of what explains the presence of visual perception on any occasion must make reference to the satisfaction of such conditions). Thus such conditions can be enabling conditions. Moreover, such conditions will plausibly also be local type *B* enabling conditions: conditions on specifically visual perception being a means of knowing. Such conditions can enter into an explanation of what explains *S*'s knowing by specifically *visual* means because they are explanatory necessary conditions on the very presence of visual perception.

What such conditions are is a matter for vision science. But it is plausible to suppose that there will also be enabling conditions, local to visual perception, which are of both types *A* and *B*, discoverable by *a priori* philosophical enquiry. For instance, Cassam (2007a) argues that visual perception is subject to a spatial perception condition. I won't discuss this here since I have discussed it at length elsewhere, see French (Forthcoming).

The enabling conditions we have considered so far are necessary conditions on visual perceptual explanations of knowledge, that is, necessary conditions on general facts of the form: *S*'s seeing *x* explains how *S* knows that *p*. They are explanatory conditions which are such that they must obtain if any fact of the form: *S*'s seeing *x* explains how *S* knows that *p* obtains. However, if we focus on specific instances of general facts of the form: *S*'s seeing *x* explains how *S* knows that *p*, then some conditions may be part of the explanation for given instances without being necessary conditions.

For instance, take the following fact:

(L) My seeing that lemon explains how I know that that lemon is yellow.

Suppose then that on a particular occasion I see the lemon and thereby come to know that it is yellow. Call this Case 1. Part of what explains how my seeing delivers knowledge in Case 1 is that the lemon looked yellow to me. That is, among the enabling conditions on my knowing that the lemon is yellow by seeing it, in Case 1, include the fact that the lemon looked yellow to me. But if I know that the lemon is yellow by seeing it, *must* it look yellow to me? That is, is the enabling condition we have identified in Case 1 a necessary condition on cases which are such that in them (L) obtains? This doesn't seem right. Consider Case 2. Again I know that the lemon is yellow by seeing it—(L) obtains. But suppose that I am in conditions where I know that yellow things will look red to me—due to some lighting tricks, or perhaps some fiddling with my visual system. Now suppose that I see the lemon, and it looks red to me. In this case I see the lemon and thereby know that it is yellow—my seeing the lemon is what explains how I know that it is yellow. But it is *not true*, in Case 2, that the lemon looks yellow to me, so this is not part of what enables my seeing the lemon to deliver knowledge in this case. That it looks *red* to me is part of what enables my seeing to deliver knowledge in Case 2. So it seems that when we focus on more specific facts, such as (L), rather than very general facts of the form: *S* knows that *p* by visual means, enabling conditions don't have to be necessary conditions (in one clear sense of 'necessary condition'). Some conditions can be part of what explains the obtaining of these specific facts even if they are not necessary for the obtaining of these specific facts.

In Case 1, the fact that the lemon looks yellow to me is part of what explains how my seeing the lemon yields knowledge that it is yellow. I have claimed that this doesn't require the fact the lemon looks yellow to me to be a necessary condition on my seeing delivering such knowledge. That is not to say that there is not a necessary condition in the vicinity. For the fact that the lemon looks yellow to me is, plausibly, an instance of a necessary condition on seeing the lemon: that it looks *some way or other* to me. (This is, as I observed in section (1.3.3) above, something we are committed to in our ordinary conception of visual perception). If this is

true, it doesn't undermine what I've been saying. For what is *explanatory*, in Case 1, is the more specific condition. Thus the more specific condition gets to count as the enabling condition in this case. In Case 1 it is the fact that the lemon looks *yellow* (as opposed to, say, brown) to me (given the normal perceptual conditions) which is explanatory. And in Case 2 it is the fact that the lemon looks *red* to me (given the *abnormal* perceptual conditions) which is explanatory.

We might think, then, that some enabling conditions will be INUS conditions, in the sense outlined by Mackie (1965). A condition is an INUS condition for p just if it is an insufficient but necessary part of an unnecessary though sufficient condition for p . So if we take p to be (L), then that the lemon looks yellow to me counts as an INUS condition for p . Since it is (I) insufficient (the lemon's looking yellow to me isn't sufficient for p), though (N) a necessary part of (U) an unnecessary but (S) sufficient condition for p .

I have been discussing enabling conditions on means of knowing, more specifically, visual means. I have distinguished between global and local enabling conditions, and type *A* and type *B* enabling conditions. Some enabling conditions are necessary conditions, but if we focus our attention on specific perceptual explanations of knowledge, not all are. (Some are INUS conditions). No doubt there is much more complexity to understanding enabling conditions than I have managed to represent here. And of course there are many more enabling conditions on visual perception being a means of knowing than I have alluded to. I have just been trying to explore how we should understand, in a little more detail, visual perceptual explanations of knowledge. I hope this discussion has put us into a position where we can understand the structure of visual perceptual explanations of knowledge a bit better, I'll end by commenting on this.

It is, we have observed, only in certain conditions that visual perception explains knowledge. Thus visual perceptual explanations of knowledge have a complex structure; that is, such explanations are a function of visual perception and certain other conditions. Now, on the face of it visual perceptual explanations of knowledge have this form:

(1) S 's seeing x explains how S knows that p .

On the way of thinking I have been recommending, accommodating the conditional nature of such explanations does not require us to reject appearances and instead think of visual perceptual explanations of knowledge as having this form:

(2) S 's seeing $x + C$ explains how S knows that p

The explanatory *relevance* of conditions C doesn't itself warrant modelling visual perceptual explanations of knowledge in terms of (2) rather than (1). For we can model the explanatory relevance of such conditions in terms of their role in explanations of subtly different facts, namely, facts of the form: how S knows that p *by visual means*. Such a model is what we have when we cast such conditions in the role of enabling conditions.

Given the explanatory conception of means of knowing, this allows us to maintain the intuitive idea that, with reference to a case discussed above, it is S 's *seeing the lemon* which is the means by which she knows that the lemon before her is yellow, not some hodgepodge (e.g., S 's seeing the lemon + S 's possessing the concept *lemon*, + S 's having a properly functioning visual system + ..., and so on). To put things another way, it allows us to maintain that what *grounds* S 's knowledge is just S 's seeing the lemon. Other factors are, of course, relevant to this grounding. But they are not themselves grounding features.

In what follows I will talk of S 's seeing x being knowledge explaining. S 's seeing x is knowledge explaining only *given* C —that is, given the satisfaction of enabling conditions. I'll take that as understood throughout. But, as I've been saying, this is not equivalent to S 's seeing $x + C$ being knowledge explaining. For this latter formulation distorts out ordinary understanding of the explanans in explanations of knowledge.

2.5 The Explanatory *Characterization* and Visual Perception

I have outlined how we might cash out the idea that visual perception is a means of knowing on an explanatory conception of that. I have also dis-

cussed some of the structure of visual perceptual explanations of knowledge, which hopefully gives us some idea of what it is for visual perception to have a knowledge explaining role, and what is required for it to perform that role. We are now in a position to give an initial statement of what the explanatory characterization of our idea of visual perception's epistemic significance is. On the explanatory characterization, the content of that idea is: *visual perception is a means of knowing, that is, visual perception is capable of satisfactorily explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions.*

The sorts of *explanations* I am interested in here are explanations of how some *S* knows some *p* on some occasion. (Much more will be said on such explanations in the next Chapter, see section (3.2.1)). Snowdon talks of some such explanations of knowledge being 'totally unproblematic' and Cassam talks of some such explanations being 'satisfactory'. The explanatory characterization involves the idea that visual perception can *satisfactorily* explain knowledge. But what does this amount to?

I will be understanding things in this way: if ϕ -ing is a means of knowing, then not only can it explain knowledge (how *S* knows), but it can do so in an *epistemically* satisfactory way. This, I take it, is constitutive of the notion of a means of knowing since that notion should be taken to be something more specific than (or perhaps just different to) 'a way of acquiring information' or 'a way of getting beliefs', or some other such notion. It is more specific (or different) in that means of knowing pertain to *knowledge*, and having knowledge is a special way of having information or belief—or perhaps just a different sort of state altogether. (How precisely this gets articulated depends on one's theory of knowledge). To say this, is to incorporate the following remark of Audi's into our discussion:

To specify a source [means] of knowledge [knowing] is to indicate where it comes from, but it is also to do something more... As I am understanding sources of *knowledge*, and as they are generally conceived in philosophical literature, they are not just where knowledge comes from; they also provide the knower with grounds of knowledge. Grounds are what it is in virtue of which (roughly, on the basis of which) one knows... If you know that my knowledge that it is raining is perceptual, as opposed, say, to testimonial, you know not only

that it comes from my perceiving something, but also that I have a perceptual ground, say a visual or auditory experience, for believing the proposition (2002, p. 82).

Suppose then that S 's ϕ -ing explains how S knows that p in an epistemically satisfactory way. We can say that part of what this requires is that ϕ -ing is that, or an element of that, in virtue of which S *knows, as opposed to merely believes*, that p . (And we can, if we want, put this in these terms: S 's ϕ -ing is or provides S with grounds for her knowledge that p).

An attempted explanation of knowledge that p will fail to be epistemically satisfactory if it fails to specify something—some state or process, ϕ -ing—which is that, or an element of that, in virtue of which S genuinely *knows* that p . For example, suppose you ask me how I know that the Prime Minister has resigned, and I answer by saying: 'I just have a hunch'. We typically wouldn't find such an answer *epistemically* satisfactory. For we don't regard having a hunch about such a matter as a route to becoming genuinely *knowledgeable*—even if it can be a route to acquiring belief or information. (Hunches can't ground such knowledge). Then, of course, there are more favourable sorts of answer, such as 'I read it in the news' or 'I heard the resignation speech'. Explanations of how I know that Prime Minister has resigned given in such terms are, in certain conditions, epistemically satisfactory. And part of why this is so is that reading something in the news, and hearing someone's testimony, can be that, or an element of that, in virtue of which one gains knowledge, as opposed to mere belief, about a subject matter. (There is more on epistemic satisfactoriness in section (3.2.2) of the next Chapter)

What it *is* for explanations of knowledge to be epistemically satisfactory is a significant theoretical question, which, in my view, requires us to think about the nature of both means of knowing (which are cited in the sorts of explanations of knowledge I am interested in here), and knowing. In Part II of this thesis I am going to enquire into what it is for explanations of knowledge in terms of specifically visual perception to be epistemically satisfactory. But there is still more background work to do. For now, a couple more remarks on the explanatory characterization.

First, there are various means of knowing. We don't think of them as all on the same epistemic footing, so to speak. We tend to prize percep-

tual means of knowing over other means. (We are fond of the assurances our own senses provide us, especially as compared to assurances we receive in even trusted testimony). Below I will highlight the fact that we intuitively think of visual perception, in a range of cases, as an exemplary means of knowing, and thus of explanations of knowledge in terms of visual means as capable of being exemplary. I elaborate on this the next Chapter, see section (3.2.4) below.

Second, the idea that some means of knowing *m* explains how some *S* knows some *p* is *not* equivalent to the idea that *m* explains how *S* *acquired* that knowledge. Means of knowing are not always means of *coming* to know. As Cassam notes we have to distinguish between means of knowing and means of coming to know, for

one's way [means] of knowing that *P* needn't be one's way of coming to know that *P*. How do I know I spent last year in Kenya? I remember. Is that how I came to know that I spent last year in Kenya? No. (2007, p. 351)

The point here is that there are cases of remembering where we remember something we *already* know. But in some such cases memory can still be a means by which we know. In Cassam's case this is confirmed by the fact that we can satisfactorily specify memory as the means by which we know in response to a 'How do you know that ...?' question which seeks such means (there is much more on such questions in the section (3.2) below). In such cases, though, memory is not the means by which we *come* to know. (Which is not to say that memory can never be a means by which we come to know, see here Cassam (2009c) pp. 115–116)

But how is this relevant to us here? We are, after all, trying to flesh out the sense in which we pre-theoretically suppose that *visual perception* is a means of knowing. And visual perception is surely a paradigm of a means of *acquiring* knowledge? That as it may be, once we appreciate the epistemic dimension to explanation in these contexts, we can intuitively recognize cases where visual perception functions as a means by which one knows without functioning as a means by which one *acquires* the knowledge in question. Suppose for instance I know that the peanut butter is in the cupboard. Call this case *Peanut Butter*. Now, suppose I know this because you told me where it is. So I *acquired* the knowledge

I have by testimony. Suppose then that I go to the cupboard to get the peanut butter, and I can see the peanut butter. At *that* point I can *see* where it is. I then know, by *visual means*, that the peanut butter is in the cupboard. (I also know more specific propositions which I didn't know before, e.g., where in the cupboard it is). A natural way to describe the resulting situation is as one in which I know that the peanut butter is in the cupboard by *multiple means*, by testimony, and then by visual perception.

That is *not* to say that I *come* to know this proposition by multiple means—it is not obvious that we can make sense of *that* idea. I acquire the knowledge just on the basis of your testimony. Our ability to make sense of *Peanut Butter* indicates that we think of visual perception as capable of being not only a means of acquiring knowledge, but also merely a means of knowing (a proposition one's knowledge of which was previously acquired). Part of why visual perception can be the means by which I know in *Peanut Butter* even though it is not the means by which I *acquired* the relevant item of knowledge, is that it is part of that in virtue of which I know (rather than merely believe) that the peanut butter is in the cupboard. But that doesn't exclude the fact that my receiving your testimony is also a part of that in virtue of which I know that the peanut butter is in the cupboard.

With these remarks in place we can state more precisely what the content of the explanatory characterization of our idea of visual perception's epistemic significance is: *visual perception is a means of knowing, that is, it is capable of explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions (how some S knows some p in that range) in an epistemically satisfactory way.*

2.6 Conclusion

I began this chapter by noting that we pre-theoretically conceive of visual perception as epistemically significant. The question has been: how should we *characterize* that idea? I have offered an explanatory characterization of that idea, drawing on Cassam's work on means of knowing, and specifically, his work on how to conceive of visual perception as a means of knowing. On the explanatory characterization, our pre-theoretic idea has this content: *visual perception is a means of knowing, that is, visual perception is capable of explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions (how some*

S knows some p in that range) in an epistemically satisfactory way. I think that this is an accurate characterization of our *pre-theoretic* understanding of how visual perception is epistemically significant. But in this Chapter I haven't tried to support that. I turn to that task now.

Chapter 3

Visual Perception as Knowledge Explaining (2)

3.1 Introduction

In the previous Chapter I outlined one way of understanding the content of our pre-theoretic idea that visual perception is a means of knowing. The content of that idea, on the explanatory characterization I offered, is the following: *visual perception is a means of knowing, that is, it is capable of explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions (how some S knows some p in that range) in an epistemically satisfactory way.* But does this characterization capture (an aspect of) how we *ordinarily* think about the relation between visual perception and knowledge? Do we ordinarily think that visual perception has the sort of knowledge-explaining role described in the explanatory characterization? I think the explanatory characterization does reflect how we ordinarily think of visual perception's epistemic significance, and I will argue for this in the current Chapter.

This discussion will serve two purposes, first of all it will help us to appreciate how the explanatory characterization captures some of our pre-theoretic epistemic commitments. This is important if we think, as I do, that substantive philosophical enquiries into a phenomenon should at least *begin* by laying bare and properly appreciating how we intuitively think of that phenomenon. (Philosophical enquiries which aren't constrained in this way are apt to seem irrelevant and far removed from the things we care about and value when not doing philosophy). Second, it will help us to further clarify some of the less clear notions we encoun-

tered in the previous Chapter, specifically, the ideas of “explaining how”, in an “epistemically satisfactory” (and “exemplary”) way.

3.2 Questions of Knowledge

We often treat visual perception as a means of knowing in the sense specified above, that is, as something which provides epistemically satisfactory explanations of knowledge. Treating visual perception in this way doesn't *require* one to be involved in responding to a request for explanation. Our commitments regarding visual perception can be manifest in all sorts of different ways, in a variety of different settings. But undoubtedly a good place to look for evidence that we think of visual perception as a means of knowing in the sense specified above, will be contexts in which questions are asked and explanations of knowledge are thereby sought. I'll begin with some remarks on these contexts and the sorts of questions I'm interested in.

To ask a question is to *do* something. It is, in the terminology of Austin (1962a), one among many of the different sorts of *illocutionary act* one may perform by uttering words on an occasion (there are many other sorts of illocutionary act which one may perform in uttering words on a particular occasion, e.g., one may *warn*, *assert*, *promise*, and so on). Part of my interest here, then, is in those illocutionary acts, or *speech-acts*, in the terminology of Searle (1969), which constitute the asking of a certain sort of question—*question acts*. More specifically, I am interested in those question acts in which an *explanation* of knowledge is sought. Even more specifically, I am interested in those question acts in which an explanation of knowledge *in terms of the means by which S knows* is sought.

Such acts are acts in which one uses a sentence to ask a certain *sort* of question, what I'll call a *How-by what means-do you know?* question, for short a *How...?* question. A *How...?* question, in the current sense of 'question', is not a question act, or a question sentence or sentence-type, it is something which can be *asked* with the use of a sentence-type in a context. It is, in some sense, a potential *content* of question acts.

A *How...?* question is *correctly* answered only by specifying the means by which *S* knows that *p*. This is not to say that there are no other sorts of answer—or response—which are proper or appropriate relative to the

sort of question a *How...?* question is. For instance, when asked how *S* knows that *p*, it can be appropriate to deny that *S* does know that *p*. This wouldn't count as a *correct* answer to the question because it amounts to denying that there *is* a correct answer to the question—it amounts to saying that the question doesn't apply, or a rejection of the question.

Question *acts* get to be acts in which a certain sort of explanation of *S*'s knowledge is sought partly in virtue of involving (the asking of) *How...?* questions—since, as noted, these are questions which are answered correctly only by specifying the means by which *S* knows, that is, only with *means explanations* of knowledge. For instance, in certain contexts, I can seek a means explanation of knowledge by asking a *How...?* question with a use of the sentence-type:

(J1) How does Jane know that John will be at the party tonight?

In one context I might use (J1) to ask the specific how question: *How-by what means—does Jane know that John will be at the party tonight?* A correct reply might be to point out that Jane spoke to John, and he informed her that he would be at the party. One thus explains Jane's knowledge by specifying the means by which she came to it—in this case, a specific instance of testimony. (In another context it might be appropriate to say that Jane doesn't know, and hence to deny, in effect, that there is a question to be answered).

So far I have talked about a certain sort of question act: an act which seeks a means explanation of knowledge. I have also noted that such acts constitutively involve a certain sort of *question (qua content)*, a *How...?* question. And I have invoked an instance of the sentence-type: 'how does *S* know that *p*?'. But some caution is required here: it is not sufficient, nor is it necessary, for performing the sort of act I am interested in here, and asking the sort of question I am interested in here, that one use a sentence of that type (even if we add: in an act which constitutes the asking of a question). The situation is rather more complicated. These points are both instances of more general points. As Fiengo says, 'If we distinguish tools [interpreted sentence-types] from the uses to which they are put [speech-acts], we must acknowledge that generally a tool may be used for different tasks...', and 'generally a task may be performed using structurally different tools' (2007, p. 5).

In sections (3.2.1) and (3.2.2) below we'll see how it is not sufficient for asking a *How...?* question that one utter, with the illocutionary force of a question, a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?', since one can use a sentence of that form to ask instead a different sort of question. The purpose of getting clear about this is to become clearer about what sort of question a *How...?* question is, and the sorts of explanation seeking acts I am interested in here. Later in the Chapter (see section (3.2.4)) I'll return to the point that to ask a *How...?* question one need not use a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'. (The overall point of this level of detail, which may seem somewhat pedantic, is to avoid misrepresenting the ordinary talk I will eventually be appealing to).

3.2.1 Explanatory Relevance

In this section and the next I want to show that one can use a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?' to ask a question which is not a *How-by what means-do you know?* question.

The term 'how' can be used to express different contents in different contexts, even in contexts where a question is being asked. Consider, for instance, the following examples taken from Cross (1991), p. 248 (numbering altered slightly):

- (1) How [in what manner] did you behave at the party?
- (2) How [by what method] do you perform an appendectomy?
- (3) How [by what means] did you get that money?
- (4) How [in what respect] do these differ?
- (5) How [by what process] do DNA molecules duplicate?
- (6) How [by what mechanism] do DNA molecules duplicate?

(I have added (6) which I take to be a variant of (5), and for further discussion of different types of how-question, see Jaworski (2009)). This data would be irrelevant to my goal in this section if we found that all uses of 'how' when embedded in the sentence-type 'how does *S* know that *p*?' expressed the *same* content, or if such uses of 'how' *must* have the same

content. But that doesn't seem to be the case. There seem to be cases where a use of 'how', embedded in a use of a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?' has a *by-what-means* content. But there do seem to be cases where a use of 'how' embedded in a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?' expresses a *by-what-mechanism* content. (There may be further variation in what is expressed by uses of 'how' when embedded in sentences of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?' but I'll focus on just this sort of variation).

Consider the following sort of case, call it *Brain Lecture*: Imagine a lecture on the brain mechanisms underlying recognitional capacities. Now suppose that there is a quiz on a "normal" human subject, Joe. For the quiz, the lecturer shows a video of Joe performing well in recognition tasks, for instance, he can recognize an image of a face as an image of a *male* face, an image of a cube as such, and so on. Suppose now that as part of the quiz the lecturer pauses the video and asks a series of questions, one of which is the following question:

(K) How does Joe know that that is a male face?

In asking this question, the lecturer is asking how Joe knows that *that image*—the presented image—is an *image* of a male face.

In this context, intuitively, a *correct* answer requires a specification of at least the central elements involved in the neural mechanisms underlying Joe's visual recognition of the presented face. The lecture, and the quiz, concerns precisely such mechanisms. In this context, it seems, the way to interpret the sentence uttered by the lecturer (so as to be in accord with her intentions) is one on which 'how' concerns the *mechanisms* underlying Joe's knowledge, not the *means* by which Joe knows. (We might think of this, in light of the discussion in the previous Chapter, as a matter of uncovering what some of the enabling conditions are for knowing by facial recognitional means). In another context, a sentence of the type (K) might well express a question which concerns the *means* by which Joe knows. In such a context the reply might just be: he recognizes the face as such. Or, he can see the face (image), and he knows a male face when he sees one. But intuitively in the context of *Brain Lecture*, any such response would reflect a misunderstanding of the question.

It seems, then, that not all question asking uses of sentences of the form ‘how does *S* know that *p*?’ are uses in which a *How...?* question is asked. In *Brain Lecture* we have a use of a sentence of that form in which a different sort of question—a *How-by what mechanism-do you know?* question—is asked. (A *How...?* question, it will be remembered, is a *How-by what means-do you know?* question.)

We might account for this with the idea that certain ‘how’ involving interrogative sentence-types, specifically, those which are apt to be used in the seeking of explanations, are context-sensitive in a certain sort of way. We might say: the question asked by such sentence-types depends upon certain contextually variable factors. In the sort of case we are interested in, the question asked with a sentence of the type ‘how does *S* know that *p*?’ will depend upon contextually variable factors (beyond those required for resolving any context-sensitivity introduced by the term for *S* and the clause for *p*, and the verb ‘know’ if that is context-sensitive). But what are the relevant contextually variable factors? Plausibly, whatever determines what is *explanatorily relevant*. I am drawing here on the discussion of a range of ‘why’ involving interrogative sentence-types in Fraassen (1980) (what he calls ‘why-questions’), so I’ll elaborate the point with reference to a case of van Fraassen’s, from p. 143:

(W1) Why did so-and-so get up at seven o’clock this morning?

With an utterance of (W1) one can seek an explanation of what van Fraassen calls the *topic* of the question. In this case the topic is the proposition that *so-and-so got up a seven o’clock this morning*. In different contexts (W1) can be used to ask subtly different questions, and to seek subtly different *sorts* of explanation, since in different contexts what is explanatorily relevant will vary. van Fraassen says:

For example, suppose you ask why I got up at seven o’clock this morning, and I say ‘because I was woken up by the clatter the milkman made’. In that case I have interpreted your question as asking for a sort of reason [explanation] that at least includes events-leading-up-to my getting out of bed, and my word ‘because’ indicates that the milkman’s clatter was that sort of reason, that is, one of the events in what Salmon would

call the causal process. Contrast this with the case in which I construe your request as being specifically for a motive. In that case I would have answered ‘No reason, really. I could easily have stayed in bed, for I don’t particularly want to do anything today. But the milkman’s clatter had woken me up, and I just got up from force of habit I suppose.’ In this case, I do not say ‘because’ for the milkman’s clatter does not belong to the relevant range of events, as I understand your question (pp. 143–144).

So, an utterance of (W_I) might, in one context, be understood as requiring an explanation in terms of the immediate causes of so-and-so getting up at seven. But then in another context it might be understood as requiring an explanation which refers, not to that, but to the reasons for which so-and-so decided to get up at that time (e.g., their motives, the considerations in the light of which they decided to get up at that time, and did get up at that time). Which sort of explanation is relevant, and hence which question gets asked with a use of (W_I), is a matter of, e.g., the needs and goals of the questioner. In different contexts there may be different questioners, or the same questioner with different needs and goals (etc), and what is explanatorily relevant can vary according to such differences.

This is how I understand van Fraassen’s picture: there can be different levels of explanation, or sorts of explanation, or ways of explaining a single phenomenon. We give expression to the sort of explanation we want by asking a determinate *question*, that is, by (in some sense) expressing, in a context, a content which itself involves a specification (in some sense) of the sort of explanation we are interested in. But which question is asked is not determined by the sentence-type alone. (W_I) alone doesn’t determine that a use of it (even a use of it which has the force of a question) will express a question with *events-leading-up-to* content, rather than a question with *motive* content. Which determinate question is asked by a use of (W_I) is in part a matter of what is explanatorily relevant in the context in which (W_I) is used. And this is context-sensitive, since it is a matter of (at least) what the questioner’s goals and intentions are.

The application of this picture to (instances of) the sentence-type

‘how does S know that p ?’ is relatively straightforward. With reference to our example, the point is this: (K)—the sentence-type ‘How does Joe know that that is a male face?’—alone doesn’t determine that a use of it will express a question with *mechanism* content, as opposed to, say, *means* content. Which determinate question is asked with a use of (K) is in part a matter of what is explanatorily relevant in the context in which (K) is used. And this is context-sensitive, since it is a matter of (at least) what the questioner’s goals and intentions are. In *Brain Lecture* the lecturer is interested in the neural mechanisms underlying human recognitional capacities. This is part of what goes into determining that with her use of (K) she asks a question with *mechanism* content, not *means* content. In different contexts what is explanatorily relevant may well be means sorts of explanations. In those contexts a use of the same sentence-type (K) may constitute the asking of a different sort of question altogether.

Part of the point of this discussion is to illustrate how not any old use of a sentence of the form ‘how does S know that p ?’ is relevant to our discussion here. We are interested in just those uses on which a *How-by-what means-do you know?* question is asked. I now want to say a bit more about how I am understanding such questions. Specifically, I want to say a bit more about their epistemic dimension.

3.2.2 Explanatory Focus

We need to appreciate how a question act in which a means explanation of knowledge is sought is a question act in which an *epistemic* explanation is sought. We can work out how this is so by reference to another more general feature of explanation seeking acts.

When one seeks an explanation one’s explanatory attention will be on a particular aspect of the topic—in van Fraassen’s technical sense of ‘topic’—requiring explanation. And so a satisfactory explanation of some topic p will focus (in some sense) on the specific aspect of p selected for explanatory scrutiny in the relevant explanation seeking question act. Call this the *phenomenon of explanatory focus*. A little more precisely, let’s say that an explanation seeking question act ϕ involves some topic p which is such that some aspect A of p is singled out for explanatory focus. We can say, then, that an answer or response r to ϕ is satisfactory only if r

provides an *A*-focused explanation of *p*.

I want to make clear what I mean by explanatory focus, and how it is relevant to us here, by looking at what van Fraassen has to say about what he calls the phenomenon of explanatory contrast. van Fraassen thinks that a range of ‘why’ involving interrogative sentence-types express questions in a context only relative to some contextually determined contrast-class. Consider, then, van Fraassen’s example (p. 141):

(W₂) Why is this conductor warped?

Of (W₂) van Fraassen says:

For this particular interrogative, the contrast could be that it is *this* conductor rather than *that* one, or that this conductor has warped rather than retained its shape. If the question is ‘Why does this material burn yellow’ the contrast-class could be the set of propositions: this material burned (with a flame of) colour *x* (p. 142).

In van Fraassen’s view the sorts of questions (*qua* contents) we are interested in here involve, in some sense, not just a specification of a sort (or level) of explanation, but also a contrast-class. But this isn’t determined by the sentence-type alone: in one context where *S* utters (W₂) the question she asks might be such that she seeks an explanation of the fact that this conductor did—*rather than didn’t*—warp. In another context it might be that *S* seeks an explanation of the fact that this—*rather than that*—conductor warped. In each context *S* asks a different question with a use of (W₂). (In ordinary speech we can single out which contrast class we are interested in by stressing the relevant expression). The questions are distinguished in terms of the fact that they involve different contrast-classes. Thus, what is expressed by (W₂) and the like, is context-sensitive in this further respect, on van Fraassen’s view: which contrast-class is operative in a context is in part a matter of the questioner’s interests. And this is something that can change from context to context.

Compare now, the situation with some how questions, for instance

(J₂) How did James sell that car?

In one context in uttering (J₂) one's attention might be on how James sold *that car*, as opposed to some other car on sale—who would buy such an *awful car*? But in another context one's attention might be on how *James*, as opposed to another salesperson, sold that car—who would buy anything from such an awful *salesman*? In the first context one's question act is such that the aspect of its topic singled out for explanatory scrutiny concerns the *car sold*, in the other context the aspect singled out concerns the *seller* of the car. In these different contexts the question acts impose different explanatory demands. A satisfactory explanation in the first context has to be focused on the fact that *the car was sold*, but in the second context a satisfactory answer has to be focused on the fact that *James* sold the car.

It seems plausible to suppose, in the spirit of van Fraassen, that sentence-types like (J₂) can be used to ask different questions in different contexts according to where one is focusing one's explanatory attention (according to which aspect of the topic is singled out for explanatory scrutiny). The way I want to frame this is as follows: the contents of explanation seeking question acts (that is, the *questions* asked in such acts) are themselves *focused*. The question: how did *James* sell that car, is different to the question: how did James sell *that car*. We can intuitively recognize the difference here, and I just want to put this in terms of there being differently focused questions (contents). The first question is James-focused the second question is car-focused. The different focuses reflect which aspects of the topic (James sold that car) are to be singled out for explanation. Which question one asks by a use of (J₂) is sensitive to where one is focusing one's explanatory attention. In a context where one is interested in James as a salesman, with a use of (J₂) one will likely ask the James-focused question, in a context where one is interested in the *car* being sold, one will likely ask the car-focused question. One's question *acts* pose different explanatory demands partly in virtue of involving differently focused contents.

To put things in terms of the idea that questions (*qua* contents) can be distinguished in terms of having different *focuses* is really just a way of highlighting and framing something that is no doubt susceptible to deeper explanation. One might ask the further question: what is it for a question to have one focus rather than another? (Just like one might

ask: what is it for an element in a photograph to be in focus?). And here one might appeal to contrast-classes, or some other technical machinery, in one's formal model. I have no need here for this deeper level of explanation, so will continue just to put things in terms of questions being focused, and one's explanatorily attention being focused on a particular aspect of the topic in question.

Is the phenomenon of explanatory focus something which manifests itself with uses of sentences of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*'? Or do such sentence-types have a meaning which, as it were, forces the asking of a question with a contextually invariant explanatory focus? It seems that we do find this phenomenon with such sentence-types. Consider the following example:

(J₃) How does Jonny know that he saw a chaffinch?

Suppose that (J₃) is used to ask a question, the topic of which is: Jonny knows that he saw a chaffinch. In using (J₃) to ask a question, one can focus one's explanatory attention on different aspects of the topic. In one context, whilst out birdwatching, Jonny might claim to have seen a chaffinch. Suppose that whether or not there are any chaffinches in the area, it is common knowledge that there are many bullfinches around. And it is known that chaffinches and bullfinches look very similar. In such a context, one might thus use (J₃) to ask the question: how does Jonny know that he saw *a chaffinch*—rather than a bullfinch? In another context, if we've just been discussing how plausible it is to suppose that knowledge requires absolute Cartesian certainty, we might ask how does Jonny *know*—rather than just have a very firm well grounded conviction—that he saw a chaffinch. Or if Jonny's general epistemic capacities are in doubt we might ask that question, but we might also ask a more Jonny-focused question, namely: how does *Jonny* know that he saw a chaffinch? (*He* doesn't know anything!)

It seems then that which question is asked with a use of a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*' can vary according to not only what sort of explanation is explanatorily relevant, but also according to where one's explanatory attention is focused.

Part of the point of this aspect of the discussion is to illustrate, again, how not any old use of a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that

p?' is relevant to us here. I am interested in just those uses in which an explanation is sought where the explanatory focus is on the *knowledge* aspect of the relevant topic. Specifically, where the explanatory focus is on knowledge *understood as the sort of epistemic achievement it is*. Thus the sorts of explanation seeking act we are interested in here are, we can say, *epistemically focused*. We might say, in the style of van Fraassen, that we are interested in cases where the explanatory focus is on the fact that *S does* know—rather than *merely believes*—that *p*. Asking such an epistemically focused question doesn't require one to grasp what it is in virtue of which knowledge is more than, or different to, mere (true) belief—or opinion, or thought, or whatever. Though one needs to grasp at least that there is some sort of epistemic difference. But this seems to be constitutive of having the concept of *knowledge* anyway.

We can henceforth understand *How-by what means-do you know?* questions to be epistemically focused (that is, to concern how *S knows*, rather than merely believes, that *p*). And thus, with that qualification in place, we can say that our interest is in just those uses of sentences which constitute the asking of a *How-by what means-do you know?* question. A response to a *How...?* question will be epistemically focused if it addresses how *S* knows (rather than merely believes) that *p*.

To illustrate, consider the following sentence-type

(J4) How does Jim know that he won't get a pay rise this year?

If I use (J4) to express a *How...?* question, I thereby seek relief from my (purported) ignorance concerning what Jim's *epistemic* credentials are (Austin (1946), p. 158 talks of 'credentials' in this context, and Fiengo (2007) emphasizes the connection between asking a question and seeking relief from some form of ignorance). Suppose the answer I receive is that Jim got word of plans for redundancies, various cutbacks, and pay freezes at his place of work, and that Jim inferred from this information that he wouldn't be getting a pay rise. This sort of response is epistemically focused, for in specifying the (putative) means by which Jim knows, it speaks to the issue of how Jim does indeed *know* that he won't get a pay rise this year. Such an answer, in certain conditions, will be *epistemically satisfactory* only if what it specifies is something which is (at least a part of) that in virtue of which Jim knows, rather than merely believes, that

he won't get a pay rise this year. If instead I am told that Jim just has a *feeling* about it, I get an epistemically focused response, but one which is simply a bad response, an epistemically unsatisfactory answer. (This just reflects our intuitive commitment to the idea that having a hunch can't, except perhaps in very special situations, be means of knowing, at least when the relevant proposition is something like that specified in (J₄).)

I hope to have shown that not all uses of sentences of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?' are uses on which a *How...?* question is asked. I have suggested that a plausible explanation of this is that such sentence-types (like other 'how' and 'why' involving interrogative sentence-types) are context-sensitive in at least two ways: they are used to ask determinate questions only relative to a contextual determination of what is explanatorily relevant, and a contextual determination of which aspect of the topic is singled out for explanatory scrutiny. A use of a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?' expresses a *How...?* question only when the context is such as to determine that means explanations are explanatorily relevant, and that the explanatory focus is epistemic (that is, on knowledge as the epistemic achievement it is, that is, knowledge as opposed to mere belief). Different sorts of questions may be expressed by such sentences in different contexts (e.g., questions which concern not means but some other sort of explanation, and questions which aren't epistemically focused).

3.2.3 Contextualism?

I think that van Fraassen's contextualism concerning some 'why' involving interrogative sentence-types is *prima facie* plausible, as is the application of that view (broadly understood, that is, without the formal details) to a range of 'how' involving interrogative sentence-types (most relevantly, sentences of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'). But one doesn't need to read much philosophical and linguistics literature to appreciate that such matters can become very complicated very quickly. For instance, if we take van Fraassen's contextualism, and the application of it here, to be about the *semantics* of the relevant interrogative sentence-types (and/or their constituent parts), then some will not want to accept the view. Let

me elaborate on this briefly, before saying why these matters need not detain us further.

On a standard conception an expression is semantically context-sensitive just in case it can take different semantic values depending upon the context of utterance. On a semantically contextualist construal of van Fraassen's picture, and the application of it I have discussed, certain interrogative sentence-types (e.g., (W_I) 'why is the conductor warped?') are semantically context-sensitive in that they can take different semantic values—namely *questions*—depending upon the context of the utterance.

But a prominent debate in contemporary philosophy of language concerns just how much semantic context-sensitivity our language exhibits. Those in the *minimalist* camp (e.g., Borg (2004), Cappelen and Lepore (2005)) think that such context-sensitivity is to be found *only* within a 'basic set' of expressions which are 'obviously' context-sensitive (or at least which have uses or senses on which they are obviously context-sensitive). There is not unanimous agreement among minimalists about the *exact* make up of the basic set, but all agree on including what Kaplan called *indexicals*, among which are:

the pronouns 'I', 'my', 'you', 'he', 'his', 'she', 'it', the demonstrative pronouns 'that', 'this', the adverbs 'here', 'now', 'tomorrow', 'yesterday', the adjectives 'actual', 'present', and others (1989, p. 489).

As Kaplan notes, these are words whose referents are 'dependent on the context of use' (p. 490), and so in a straightforward sense, they are semantically context-sensitive. And since it is obvious that these expressions are semantically context-sensitive, they are apt to go into the minimalist's 'basic set'. What else goes into the set? Cappelen and Lepore, chief proponents of one form of minimalism, also include 'the contextu-als' in their basic set (e.g., common nouns such as 'enemy' and others, as well as common adjectives like 'foreign' and others, (2005), p. 1). But, as the name suggests, a minimalist will not want to add much beyond this to their basic set.

The point then is that minimalists will probably want to reject the van Fraassen view and the application of it discussed here. A proper defence

of the van Fraassen view, and its application, understood in this way, would require delving in to this sort of dispute (among others).

That as it may be, this level of detail is not necessary for my purposes here. For there might be, for all I've said, something like the distinction between what a sentence can be used to *say* or *express* (in some technical semantic sense), and what a sentence can be used to *convey* or *communicate*. What a sentence can be used to convey or communicate can be highly context-sensitive even if what it can be used to say is not. So, if one isn't happy with taking the van Fraassen style view I've outlined at the level of semantics, then we can say this instead: the sorts of sentences I am interested in here can be used to convey or communicate—and in an ordinary sense *ask*—questions, and which questions are asked (conveyed, communicated), by uses of them *is* context-sensitive in the ways outlined (that is, sensitive to what is explanatorily relevant and to where one's explanatory attention is focused). This is all I want to insist upon, and I think it is supported by the discussion above. But, for all that, what such sentences express or ask—in some technical semantic sense—may be insensitive to contextual variations of explanatory relevance and focus.

With this background in place I turn finally to some examples of where *How...?* questions arise and are satisfactorily answered with visual perceptual explanations. We will also see how in asking such a question it is not necessary that one use a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'.

3.2.4 How...? Questions in Conversation

To find the explanatory characterization of our idea that visual perception is epistemically significant manifest in our ordinary thought and talk we can look to ordinary examples where a *How...?* question arises and is answered satisfactorily in terms of visual perception. Moreover, we need to address what it is for some such visual perceptual explanations of knowledge to be exemplary. So as to have some structure to guide us I will look to situations involving *conversations* satisfying the following:

Conversation Schema:

- (i) A question act is performed in which an epistemically focused explanation of knowledge is sought (in short, in which a *How...?* question is asked).
- (ii) In response to the *How...?* question visual perception is put forward (somehow) as the—or a—means by which the individual in question knows the proposition in question.
- (iii) The answer given to the *How...?* question provides an epistemically satisfactory and exemplary explanation of the knowledge in question.

Conversations satisfying this schema are, I want to suggest, ones in which an (epistemically focused) *explanation* of knowledge is sought (that's what the satisfaction of (i) entails), and in which an *epistemically satisfactory* and *exemplary* explanation of knowledge is given by presenting visual perception as a *means of knowing* (that's what the satisfaction of (ii) and (iii) entails). That it is easy to imagine perfectly ordinary conversations satisfying this schema supports my claim that the explanatory characterization is an appropriate characterization of our pre-theoretic understanding of visual perception's epistemic significance. (Though I make no claim to have "proved" that, I am just trying to highlight its plausibility.)

Now, to avoid the potentially distortive artificiality involved in putting things in this schematic way, the examples I give below are presented in the context of some discussion of some complexities involved in the satisfaction of (i), (ii) and (iii). First of all, let's ask what are the likely scenarios in which a *How...?* question will arise? Then we can turn to examples satisfying the above schema.

Where a *How...?* question arises at all, it is typically in a conversational context in which a proposition of the form *S knows that p* is salient. For instance, it might be a context in which an individual is being discussed and a claim is made of that individual (explicitly or implicitly), that they know that *p*. Or it might be a context in which an individual explicitly claims to know that *p* or where they say something which is such as to imply that they know that *p* (or at least, suggest to the hearer that they

know that p , whether or not that was the speaker's intention). It might be a context in which p is being discussed, and it is claimed that some individual knows that proposition.

Arguably, contexts in which assertions are made are particularly well suited to be contexts in which *How...?* questions arise (as Williamson (2000) notes, asking such a question constitutes a 'standard response to an assertion', p. 252). This may be because, as Austin suggests, when one asserts that p there is a sense in which one implies that one knows that p . And so, on making an assertion that p , one is 'directly exposed' to the question "*How* do you know [that p]?" (1946, p. 149). Whether or not Austin is right, we can say that contexts in which assertions are made are at least likely to be contexts in which propositions of the form S knows that p are in some sense salient. And hence they will likely be contexts where *How...?* questions are apt.

This does *not* mean that contexts in which an individual makes an assertion will be contexts in which it is (in some broad sense) *appropriate* to ask a *How...?* question. There are all sorts of reasons why such a question may not be the appropriate thing to ask in contexts in which assertions are made. For instance, it may be plainly obvious how the individual in question knows the proposition in question. As Williamson says '...*'How do you know?'* is normally appropriate. Of course, it is silly to ask *'How do you know?'* when the questioner obviously knows as well as the asserter how the latter knows...' (p. 252). Here is an example, call it *Newspaper*. Suppose that we are sitting on a train together, and each of us has an interest in sports photography. I am reading the newspaper, and you ask *'Are there any pictures of yesterday's tennis match?'* Now, suppose I turn to the back of the paper to see and say *'Yes, there are a few'*. You then say, accepting my response, *'Thanks, can I look at them when you have finished?'* It would be quite odd if instead of that response you asked (genuinely, non-jokingly, etc) *'how do you know that there are pictures of yesterday's tennis match in the newspaper?'* Since in the context as described it is just obvious—to both of us—that I can *see* that there are such pictures.

But still, in *Newspaper*, in asserting what I do I am in *some* sense exposed to a *How...?* question. For such a *question* can still be apt or appropriate, even if *the asking of it* is not. (In *Newspaper* the question of how I

know applies and the answer is that I know by visual perception). This is arguably because if one *does* know that *p*, then there will be a means by which one knows that *p*, and so there will be an answer to the relevant *How...?* question.

It should be clear, then, that all sorts of conversational context are apt to be those in which *How...?* questions arise. *How...?* questions can arise as part of an involved technical discussion in the seminar room or laboratory, in a casual conversation with a friend or stranger, in a urgent situation in a hospital, in the court room or police station, in a therapy session, on the telephone to a cold-caller, and indefinitely many other sorts of conversational context. This is no surprise since so many conversational contexts are ones in which *assertions* can be made, and more generally, in which a proposition of the form *S knows that p* can become salient.

Let's turn now to some examples involving visual perceptual explanations of knowledge.

Affair

Consider first the following example, call it *Affair*. Suppose that Jack is protective of his sister Jane, and has never been keen on her partner Joe. Now consider the following exchange between them.

Jack: I think you should break up with Joe.

Jane: What!? Why?

Jack: Where was he last night?

Jane: I don't know.

Jack: He has been unfaithful to you. He kissed Sarah.

Jane: What?! You have always disliked Joe, and you are always trying to turn me against him. He wouldn't cheat on me. How do you know that he kissed Sarah?

Jack: I saw him kissing Sarah.

In this example Jane asks Jack a *How...?* question and thereby seeks an epistemically focused explanation of Jack's knowledge. (It may be that

Jane herself supposes that Jack *doesn't* know, but in asking the question she *presents* herself as seeking an explanation for Jack's knowledge—she *presents* herself as seeking relief from a certain sort of ignorance, which she can do even if she isn't actually (or doesn't believe herself to be) ignorant in the relevant respect). In response Jack specifies that he knows by visual means—or at least, that visual means figure in the overall means by which he knows (see Peacocke (2000) who distinguishes atomic from composite means). Jack thereby attempts to explain how he knows in terms of visual perception. So, this conversation straightforwardly satisfies (i) and (ii) of the above Conversation Schema. But does it satisfy (iii)? That is, is Jack's response epistemically *satisfactory* and *exemplary*?

There may be all sorts of ways in which Jack's answer here is not satisfactory, but, as noted above, we need to isolate an *epistemic* dimension of satisfactoriness. Intuitively, Jack's answer *is* epistemically satisfactory. We think that Jack's response is epistemically focused, for it speaks to how he genuinely *knows*. And we think that it is epistemically satisfactory for it specifies something in virtue of which he knows (rather than merely believes). We think that the grounds for knowing he (in effect) claims to have are adequate. This is a case where intuitively we want to say that Jack's explanation of his knowledge in terms of visual perception is, to echo Snowdon, *totally unproblematic* (in the relevant epistemic respect).

That we do intuitively find Jack's explanation epistemically satisfactory is revealed by our reactions to certain sorts of follow-up. Consider, first:

Jane: Well, you may have *seen* him kissing Sarah, but how do you *know* that he was kissing her?

Jack: Huh!?

That we find Jane's response here odd, and Jack's reaction apt, indicates that we think of Jack's initial answer to Jane's *How...?* question as epistemically satisfactory. We are inclined to think that if Jane meant this remark seriously, and was genuinely trying to question the epistemic significance of visual perception in the context in question, then she has either misunderstood the concept of knowledge, or of visual perception, or both concepts (see here Cassam (2008), p. 41).

The inappropriateness of this follow-up also illustrates the fact that we think that visual perceptual explanations of knowledge can be *exemplary*. But what does this amount to? That Jack's explanation of his knowledge in *Affair* is exemplary is not a matter of it being an *entailing* explanation. It is not an entailing explanation. 'Jack saw Joe kissing Sarah' doesn't entail 'Jack knows that Joe kissed Sarah'. Although he didn't, Jack *might* have refused to believe his eyes. Rather, what I mean by saying that visual perceptual explanations of knowledge, such as Jack's, can be exemplary is that they (or some of them) are explanations which can block off further questions—from being *apt* if not *asked*—in a way that some other sorts of explanations of knowledge can't. In a range of cases, such as in Jane's follow up above, it doesn't seem to make *sense* to question the epistemic power of visual perceptual means—at least, that is, when we are concerned with *properly functioning* perceptual means, and so excluding, say, cases of partial eyesight, or whatever. As Cassam (2008) says 'perceptual explanations of knowledge have a kind of intrinsic intelligibility or transparency that few other explanations possess' (p. 45). In this respect visual perceptual explanations of knowledge seem to be more powerful than explanations of knowledge in terms of some other means.

We can adapt the current example to illustrate this point further. Suppose instead Jack explains how he knows in terms of some testimony he received:

Jack: I heard from Jess that he kissed Sarah.

Jane: Well, you may have heard that, but how do you *know* that he was kissing her?

Jane's follow up here simply isn't strange in the way that the previously mentioned follow up seems to be. We are not inclined to think that it reflects a misunderstanding of knowledge or testimony.

It is important to note that it is explanations of knowledge in terms of *genuine visual perception*, as opposed to *mere visual experience* which we ordinarily take to be capable of providing such exemplary explanations of knowledge. Suppose instead Jack attempted to explain his knowledge in terms of a visual experience he enjoyed, without thereby committing to any form of genuine perceptual contact. We might in some contexts find

such an explanation epistemically satisfactory, but it is hard to see how such explanations can be epistemically exemplary. For instance, suppose Jack answered the request for explanation as follows:

Jack: I was staring out of the window and it looked as if Joe was kissing Sarah.

Or:

Jack: I was staring out of the window and I seemed to see Joe kissing Sarah.

It would be perfectly legitimate for Jane to follow up in this way:

Jane: Well, it may have looked that way to you, but how do you *know* that he was kissing her?

Or

Jane: Well, did you actually *see* him kissing her, how do you *know* that he was kissing her?

These sorts of replies don't reflect a misunderstanding of the power of *mere visual experience*, they reflect accurately that we don't regard mere visual experience—that is, experience considered apart from whether there is genuine perceptual contact—as having the same epistemic force as visual *perception*.

I have cashed out the idea that visual perceptual explanations of knowledge can be exemplary in terms of the idea that in the light of them certain “comeback” questions are hard to make sense of. But this isn't the same as the idea that there can be no “epistemic comebacks”. The point is the more restricted point that epistemic comebacks which *question the epistemic power of properly functioning visual perception* are unintelligible in these sorts of cases, *not* that all epistemic comebacks are unintelligible. *Other* sorts of epistemic comeback are perfectly intelligible. For instance, consider these two sorts of comeback that Jane might make in *Affair*, first

Jane: Well, you may *think you saw* him kissing Sarah, but he wouldn't do that. How do you *know* that he was kissing her?

Consider also:

Jane: What? Where? How do you know it was him?

Jack: In the park. I *saw* him!

Jane: You must be mistaken, he wouldn't do that to me.

In both comebacks Jane is *not* willing to concede that Jack did indeed *see* Joe kissing Sarah. In giving this response Jane doesn't question the exemplary epistemic power of visual perception, she in effect *admits* it, for she admits that *if* Jack did see what he claims he saw, then given the details of the context in question, he would (most likely) thereby know what he claimed to know. These are still epistemic comebacks though, since Jane questions Jack's entitlement to the beliefs he has about his *grounds*. Jane questions whether Jack is entitled to believe that he did indeed see what he thought he saw. Questioning the basis of beliefs or claims *about* visual perception is a sort of epistemic challenge, but not the sort which undermines the idea that I claim we are committed to in ordinary thought and talk: viz., visual perceptual explanations of knowledge can be exemplary.

Finally, the claim is not that *all* visual perceptual explanations of knowledge are exemplary in this way. The most obvious cases where such explanations are exemplary is where there is a direct relationship between what is seen (the object or objects of visual perception) and the content of the knowledge—as in *Affair*. But in other cases visual perceptual explanations may be less secure. To illustrate with a familiar example: I might know that my neighbour is home by seeing her car in the driveway. But if I explain my knowledge with reference to the fact that I saw her car, a follow up along the lines of “you may have seen her car but do how do you *know* that she is home” *is* intelligible. (Just like with some explanations of knowledge in terms of testimony).

Presumably this is because such cases involve an element of ampliative inference. In more pure cases, such as *Affair*, such follow ups are hard to make sense of. As a final example: suppose I say “Juliet's car is in the drive” and you ask “How do you know?” if in response I say “I can see the car in the drive” or “I'm looking at the car in the drive right now”, and you say, “yes but how do you *know* that the car is in the drive?”, we would

struggle to find your response intelligible (unless we also understood you to be questioning my entitlement to believe that I *saw* the car).

Jimmy

Affair is an example of a conversation which satisfies the above Conversation Schema. To get such examples, though, we don't have to look to cases which involve the use of a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'. As I noted above, it is not *necessary* in order to ask a *How...?* question that one uses such a sentence-type. For instance, Austin notes that the question 'Do you know?' is 'commonly taken as an invitation to state not merely *whether* but also *how* you know' (1946, p. 149). Plausibly, then, one can ask a *How...?* question, in some contexts at least, by uttering a sentence of the form 'Do you know that *p*' (no doubt the sentence-type 'Is that true?' can play a similar role in some contexts as well).

Here is a further example which fits the above Conversation Schema, but also illustrates the current point, call it *Jimmy*. Consider the following exchange between Jane and Jack:

Jane: Ah, good, Jimmy is in town, I need to have a word with him.

Jack: Oh, I thought he was in Barbados?

Jane: So did I, but look, he is in the street [pointing out of the window, waving to Jimmy].

By varying various contextual details we can, perhaps, understand Jack's utterance of the sentence specified above as constituting the performance of various different sorts of act. But a natural understanding of this case is one on which Jack's utterance constitutes the asking of a *How...?* question (and thus satisfies (i) of the Conversation Schema). Jack is, in effect, asking Jane to explain how she knows that Jimmy is in town. Suppose, for instance, that Jack didn't notice that Jane was commenting on what she saw through the window, and so this is a natural thing for Jack to ask. Moreover, asking this question aids Jack in resolving the conflict of information he is presented with—that is, the conflict between his prior belief concerning Jimmy's whereabouts and the new information on that matter he has just received from Jane.

But does Jane's response to Jack's *How...?* question satisfy (ii)? Is it an answer in which visual perception is put forward as the means by which she knows? Jane doesn't *state* that she knows by means of visual perception, she doesn't even state that she visually perceives. But all (ii) requires is that visual perception is *somehow* put forward as the means by which the individual in question knows. And surely in *Jimmy* this looser condition is satisfied. We might say that Jane's second utterance explicitly *indicates* that she knows by visual means, even though she doesn't explicitly *state* that—as she might, for instance, with a use of 'I can see him in the street'. Her words and actions aid her in indicating this, for she points out of the window and says 'look'. By doing this she instructs Jack as to where to direct his *gaze*, indicating that he should *see* for himself. Jane thus indicates that she knows by visual means.

Moreover, we find this explanation of how Jane knows, in terms of her visual perception, epistemically satisfactory. We think, that is, that Jane's explanation speaks to what makes it the case that she knows rather than merely believes. It even provides Jack with a rational basis for resolving his conflict of information. Indeed, it would be quite irrational for Jack to suspend judgement on Jimmy's whereabouts *without questioning whether Jane did indeed see what she (effectively) claims she saw*. So once more we have a case which satisfies (iii); Jane's response is both epistemically satisfactory, and exemplary.

Aside from providing a further example which satisfies the above Conversation Schema, the current point is that in *Jimmy*, given our interpretation of it, we have an example where a *How...?* question is asked even without the use of a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'. Furthermore, the question-act doesn't even involve a use of an *interrogative* sentence. It may be that, typically, questions are asked with the use of interrogative sentences (as opposed to sentences in other grammatical moods), but speech-acts with such an illocutionary force need not involve interrogative sentences.

Once more, this is a specific instance of a more general point. Fiengo's point, quoted above, is worth reiterating here, with added emphasis: 'generally a task may be performed using *structurally* different tools' (p. 5). And in general it is important that we distinguish mood from force, as Boisvert and Ludwig note, 'a sentence in any mood may be used to perform any

type of speech act' (2006, p. 868). For instance,

'My coffee cup is empty' may be used to direct someone to fill the cup. 'Do you realize what trouble you are in?' may be used to assert that someone is in trouble. 'Tell me what time it is, please' may be used to ask a question. 'I will be there without fail' may be used to make a promise. 'In my opinion he is safe', may be used, by an umpire, to declare a runner safe. 'What a fool he is!' may be used to make an assertion and 'Isn't he the cutest thing?' may be used to perform an expressive (p. 868).

So it should come as no surprise that a *How...?* question can be asked with the use of a sentence-type which is neither (a) one which is used in what we might think of as the *canonical* way of expressing such questions (where that would be to utter a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'), nor even (b) in the interrogative mood—the mood typical of sentences used in the asking of questions.

3.2.5 Further Complexities of Language Use

We can see, then, that asking *How...?* questions is not as simple as merely uttering a sentence of the form 'how does *S* know that *p*?'. It is worth noting this and other complexities so as not to succumb to a distorted way of thinking about *How...?* questions and (ultimately) the content of our commitments regarding visual perception's epistemic significance. If we want to find what additional content there is to our idea of visual perception's epistemic significance by looking to our thought and talk, then we had better not represent that thought and talk in such a way that betrays its true—complex, messy—nature. This is why I have been spending time discussing these complexities.

In a similar vein we should also emphasize that distinct speech-acts with the same force, sentential structure, and content, can be quite different. We can appreciate this last point, with respect to *How...?* questions, by drawing on Austin's distinction between *How...?* question-acts which are pointed and those which aren't (see 1946, p. 150). A *How...?* question may well be asked, Austin notes, 'only out of respectful curiosity, from a genuine desire to learn'. In this sort of case there is no critical aspect to

the asking of the *How...?* question. In asking it, one doesn't mean to *challenge* the individual. But, Austin says, a *How...?* question may also be asked as a '*pointed*' question. When one asks a *How...?* question as a pointed question there is a suggestion that perhaps the relevant individual doesn't know the relevant proposition at all. In such a case, one's question-act is more critical, it constitutes more of a challenge to the individual.

To illustrate, suppose that we take a country walk together, we are surrounded by, among other things, wildlife. Suppose that I claim that the bird before us is a goldfinch. This is a case where I expose myself to a *How...?* question, which you ask by uttering the sentence 'How do you know that it is a goldfinch?'. Now, as Austin says, in asking the question

"How do you know?" you are not taken to have *queried my credentials as stated*, though you have asked what they were: nor have you *disputed my facts* (the facts on which I am relying to prove it's a goldfinch), though you have asked me to detail them. (p. 158).

Insofar as your act is as Austin describes your question is not asked as a pointed question. Your interest may, for instance, be in learning about bird classification, and perhaps you, assuming that I know what I am talking about, just want to learn from me.

But an act with that very same force, sentential structure, and content may well be asked as a pointed question. For instance, suppose you are something of a bird expert. But it is clear to you that I am rather ignorant when it comes to such things. Thus, when I assert that the bird before us is a goldfinch, and I am correct, you suspect guesswork, and thus put to me the question of how I know that it is a goldfinch. In this case, your question is pointed. In asking the question you thereby challenge me to justify my assertion—something I can attempt to do by specifying the means by which I (think I) know that it's a goldfinch.

Looking back, plausibly Jane's *How...?* question in *Affair* was *pointed*. Jane took Jack's assertion that Joe had kissed another woman to be in need of defence—a defence Jack gives by specifying the means by which he knows. But Jack's *How...?* question in *Jimmy* wasn't a pointed question. He didn't mean to challenge Jane's assertion, but ask about its basis so as he could rationally decide for himself on the whereabouts of Jimmy.

We can admit too that *How...?* question-acts can be more or less pointed, depending on a number of things. For instance, how critical a mood is the questioner in? How suspicious are they of *whether* the individual in question knows the given proposition? How important is it, for the questioner, that the individual in question *does* know the given proposition? And so on.

The point that speech-acts with the same force, sentential structure, and content (in some sense of ‘content’ which isn’t necessarily semantic in the strict and technical sense which minimalists insist upon), can nonetheless differ in a number of interesting ways should come as no surprise. There are many features which can make for significant differences (of many kinds) between otherwise similar speech acts. Regarding question acts, for instance, the way or manner in which a question is asked is significant (where that is determined by e.g., such properties as the tone of voice and other auditory/phonetic features, and features of one’s body language in asking the question, e.g., eye contact, hand and facial gestures, posture, and so on). The way in which a question is asked can (at least partially) determine all sorts of different characterizations of that act, e.g., as an *aggressive* act, or as a *sensitive* act.

That *How...?* question acts can differ in significant ways (e.g., pointedness) which aren’t determined, or at least fully determined, by their force, sentential structure and content, is a specific instance of this general fact about speech-acts mentioned—a fact of far more complexity than I have represented here. Although we have utilized the above Conversation Schema in guiding our discussion, the result is not an artificial representation of our ordinary thought and talk, for we are not ignoring, but embracing the various complexities involved in a conversation fitting that schema.

Despite these complexities it is clear that there are ordinary conversations which fit that schema, and hence it is plausible to suppose that we do think that visual perception has the knowledge-explaining role which the explanatory characterization captures.

3.3 Conclusion

We conceive of visual perception as epistemically significant. The question I have been addressing in this Chapter and the previous Chapter is: how should we *characterize* that idea? I have offered an explanatory characterization of that idea. On the explanatory characterization, our pre-theoretic idea has this content : *visual perception is a means of knowing, that is, visual perception is capable of explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions (how some S knows some p in that range) in an epistemically satisfactory way.* I have not been concerned with whether visual perception is a means of knowing (in the sense specified in the explanatory characterization). I have tried, instead, in the current Chapter, to find support for the claim that the explanatory characterization accurately reflects how we ordinarily think of visual perception and its epistemic significance.

To this end I have outlined some of the general features of explanation seeking acts, and then some specific features of our practice of seeking explanations of knowledge. We seek such explanations, I suggested, by asking *How...?* questions. Such question acts are epistemically focused explanation seeking acts, regarding topics of the form: *S* knows that *p*, which demand epistemically focused responses, given in terms of the (putative) means by which *S* knows that *p*. Means explanations of knowledge are epistemically focused. Successful or good means explanations of knowledge are epistemically satisfactory. This is partly because they specify something—a means of knowing—which is that, or an element of that in virtue of which *S* genuinely *knows* that *p*.

I then looked to some conversational situations in which such explanations are sought, and given in terms of visual perception. Moreover, I looked to perfectly ordinary cases where visual perceptual responses are *epistemically* satisfactory and *exemplary*. I focused a lot on the canonical way of asking *How...?* questions (that is, with sentences of the form ‘how does *S* know that *p*?’). But I also demonstrated how *How...?* explanation seeking acts don’t have to involve such sentence-types. Discussing such complexities, and other complexities involved in a conversation satisfying the conditions of the Conversation Schema, allowed us to avoid a distorted representation of our ordinary talk. Given my goals here, it was important not to ignore the true nature of such talk.

I focused mainly on just two examples (*Affair* and *Jimmy*), but they are representative of the sorts of explanations in terms of visual perception that we are liable to give in our ordinary talk. Throughout the course of this Chapter, and the previous Chapter, I have appealed to various other examples which we might reflect upon in the same way and draw the same conclusions from, for instance:

(Q) How do you know that lighter is under the desk?

(A) I can see it. (This is Cassam's example)

(Q) How do you know that the lemon before you is yellow?

(A) I can see that it is yellow.

(Q) How do you know that your copy of *Naming and Necessity* is on the desk?

(A) I can see it/I can see that it is on the desk.

(Q) How do you know that there is peanut butter in the cupboard?

(A) I can see that there is peanut butter in the cupboard.

(Q) How do you know that Juliet's car is in the drive?

(A) I can see Juliet's car in the drive.

And so on. We can imagine such questions and answers being embedded in conversations which satisfy the Conversation Schema, and so provide further support for the claim that the explanatory characterization I have offered does accurately reflect key aspects of our ordinary thought and talk about visual perception and knowledge.

I turn now to the question of how we should *account for* visual perception's epistemic significance. What *makes it the case* that visual

perception is epistemically significant in the way we think it is? This question can now be formulated in terms of what it is about visual perception and knowledge which is such that a visual perceptual explanation of knowledge that p can satisfactorily specify that, or an element of that, in virtue of which S genuinely knows that p (as opposed to merely believes that p)?

Part II

The Explanatory Part

Chapter 4

Visual Perception as Reason Giving (I)

4.1 Introduction

From now on, I am going to assume that visual perception is as we ordinarily conceive of it to be—that our ordinary conception of visual perception and its epistemic significance, outlined in Part I, reflects facts about visual perception. The task of the next two Chapters is to explore what makes it the case that visual perception is epistemically significant in the way we think it is. Following Cassam I'll call this the *question of explanation* (2007, p. 341). The question of explanation concerns what account we should give of the fact that visual perception is a means of knowing? Can we explain, that is, the fact that visual perception can be the or an element of that in virtue of which some *S* *knows*—as opposed to merely believes—some *p*? The question concerns some of the general enabling conditions on visual perceptual explanations of knowledge. In section (4.2) I discuss the question of explanation in a little more detail.

In these Chapters I will try to support a *Reasons Answer* to the question of explanation. A Reasons Answer says that part of what makes it the case that visual perception is a means of knowing is that it has a reason giving role. More exactly:

Reasons Answer

Because of its nature, seeing *x* is a means of knowing in that when *S* knows that *p* by seeing *x* it is at least partly because seeing *x* ensures that some constitutive condition on knowl-

edge is satisfied, namely that *S* has good reasons to believe that *p*.

Some qualifications: (a) I'll restrict attention to just a range of cases. I will focus on just basic cases. Roughly, these are cases where (i) *p* concerns the object of visual perception *x*, and (ii) *p* is a proposition which represents *x* as *F* where *F* is a feature which we intuitively take to be a visible feature (in the phenomenological sense discussed in Chapter 1 above). Such features include *being red*, *being cubic in shape*, *having such-and-such a texture*, and so on, but not *belonging to Jones*, *having such-and-such an atomic structure* and so on. Thus, I am interested in cases where one can know that the lemon before one is yellow on the basis of seeing the lemon (say). But I will bracket cases such as cases where one knows that one's neighbour is at home because they can see their neighbour's car in the driveway. I will also bracket cases where one can see that the lemon belongs to Jones—cases where one knows, on the basis of vision, that the lemon belongs to Jones (e.g., because of an evidential link between what one sees, and the content in question). (b) I understand any specific Reasons Answer to be a partial answer to the question of explanation. Such an answer gives at best part of the explanation of visual perception's epistemic significance. I can't imagine that considerations of, say, reliability are not also relevant to visual perception's epistemic significance. But I will bracket that. (c) I want to bring out that some form of Reasons Answer is a good and plausible partial answer to the question of explanation. The aim is not to establish it, or promote it above alternatives.

One philosopher who has the resources at his disposal to give a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation is McDowell. I will focus my discussion around McDowell's views, and the prospects for a McDowellian version of the Reasons Answer.

A Reasons Answer involves three crucial claims

- (1) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition.
- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied.
- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

In section (4.3) I offer some basic considerations which suggest that (1) is plausible (and in the discussion of McDowell in section (4.6) I defend the condition as it applies to visually based knowledge from some salient criticisms). Much of the discussion in what follows will involve examples wherein we can appreciate that (2) is plausible. To support (3) we might look at theories of visual perception—theories which tell us what the nature of such perception is, or give accounts of constitutive aspects of visual perception. The plausibility of (3) might then be thought to depend upon having a good theory of seeing in view which makes it clear that visual perception is reason giving because of the nature it has (according to the theory's view of its nature). Call this the *Theory Strategy* for motivating (3).

For the most part I will go along with the Theory Strategy. The theories I will consider are McDowell's theory of seeing (this Chapter, sections (4.4)–(4.5)), and relationalist views of seeing (next Chapter). The conclusion of this Chapter—see section (4.7)—will be that the McDowellian Reasons Answer, and so some sort of Reasons Answer, looks plausible with respect to (1) and (2). This constitutes a partial defence of a Reasons Answer.

Now, if we accept McDowell's theory of seeing, that puts (3) in a good light too. Can we say, then, that a Reasons Answer looks good and plausible because a *McDowellian* Reasons Answer does? It depends on whether there is a good reason to accept McDowell's theory of seeing. At a general level McDowell argues that seeing cannot be reason giving (which he thinks it is) unless it is conceived along the lines of his theory. In Chapter 5 I will question this argument. I will proceed dialectically. I will show how non-McDowellian relationalist views give accounts of the nature of seeing on which we can hold onto (3). I will then rebut some likely McDowellian criticisms of this suggestion. Thus, absent further considerations, we don't find support for (3) in a McDowellian Reasons Answer, as opposed to, say, a relationalist Reasons Answer. (To be clear I don't argue against McDowell's *theory* of seeing, nor *for* a relationalist view. I argue just that McDowell's theory is not required to see how it can be of the nature of seeing that it has a reason giving role).

That leaves us with McDowellian and relationalist ways of holding on to (3)—and of course, there are other views of seeing which will sustain (3),

e.g., Peacocke (2001, 2004), which I won't discuss here. To complete the task of supporting a Reasons Answer do we not need to work out which theory of seeing to accept? If the *Theory Strategy* is correct, then yes we do. But there is no obvious reason to think that the Theory Strategy *is* correct. The discussion of the McDowellian and relationalist views, I claim, helps us to see how it can be of the nature of seeing that it is reason giving because seeing constitutively has some of the features we ordinarily suppose that it has. But what is not obvious is whether acknowledging this requires any particular *theory* of those features. Thus, my tentative conclusion will be that we have support for (3), and hence a Reasons Answer, which is relatively theory neutral.

4.2 The Question of Explanation

4.2.1 Why Ask It?

In this Chapter I want to (partially) explain the capacity visual perception has of explaining knowledge in an epistemically satisfactory way (in short: the fact that visual perception is a means of knowing). This is the question of explanation. I think there is a genuine question here, worthy of attention. But I don't suppose everyone will agree to this. So, without attempting to persuade anyone who disagrees, it is perhaps worth pausing to say at least why *I* think there is a question worth pursuing here.

Consider these seemingly undeniable claims: seeing an object can be a way of coming to know what colour the object has. Feeling an object is at least not typically a way of coming to know what *colour* it has. Seeing a yellow lemon can yield knowledge that it is yellow, but hoping that the lemon is yellow can't. It seems obvious that I can know that the lemon before me is yellow by seeing it, but we would have to find rather special circumstances to find a case where I can know that it is yellow by, say, *running my finger around it*. And hoping that the lemon is yellow is surely not a way of knowing that content. The epistemic differences between seeing on the one hand and tactile perception (with respect to colour knowledge) and hoping (with respect to knowledge) on the other, seem to be *real* differences. And plausibly these real differences are susceptible to explanation. I am inclined to say that they *cry out for explanation*—there

has to be something which explains these real differences. It is surely not a *brute fact* that visual perception is a source of colour knowledge yet tactile perception (typically) isn't, or that visual perception is a source of knowledge yet hoping isn't.

What has this got to do with the question of explanation? I take it that by answering the question of explanation we will be well positioned to explain these differences—and this is why the question of explanation strikes me as a genuine question worth pursuing. An explanation of seeing's epistemic significance in terms of its reason giving role can help here. Seeing an object can provide reasons for beliefs about the object's colour, tactile perception typically can't, nor can hoping. This is at least part of why seeing an object can be a means of knowing an object's colour, and tactile perception and hoping can't.

4.2.2 The Form of an Answer

What form might an answer to the question of explanation take? Consider the following from Peacocke (2009)

the explanation of why a cognitive state is a means of acquiring knowledge has to mention the constitutive nature of that state...[And] some constitutive feature of knowledge itself has to be cited as something that a means of acquiring knowledge can ensure. If the means were not to ensure this constitutive feature of knowledge, it could not be a means of acquiring knowledge (p. 731).

Drawing on these principles, we might think that an answer to the question of explanation should take the following form: it is of the nature of visual perception that seeing x can ensure the satisfaction of some constitutive feature of knowledge. More specifically, a constitutive feature of knowledge which is relevant to the *epistemic* dimension of knowledge. (There is more on the epistemic in the next section). At a general level *that* is why visual perception is a means of knowing. At a less general level the substantive explanation will then identify specific constitutive features of visual perception, and of knowledge. The idea then is that when S knows that p by seeing x it is—at least partly—in virtue of the fact

that S 's seeing x , given the nature it has, ensures the satisfaction of some important constitutive condition on knowledge (a constitutive condition which is relevant to knowledge being the sort of epistemic state that it is).

I myself think that this is a good form to work with in answering the question of explanation. And I will be interested here in the prospects for an answer to the question of explanation which has this form. Though I am not sure that we should accept this as a matter of the *principles* Peacocke lays out here (at least, not without some further assumptions). But we don't have to accept that answers to the question of explanation *must* come in a certain form. It is enough to identify a plausible looking form, and then discuss instances of explanations that fit that form. And since I will only be interested in explanations which *are* concerned with drawing on constitutive features of seeing and knowing to explain seeing's epistemic significance, the form we've extracted from looking at Peacocke's principles is a good one to be going on with.

I am interested in an answer to the question of explanation which draws on constitutive conditions of visual perception and knowledge. But how are we to understand the notion of a *constitutive* condition? Burge (2010) says

To be an instance of a kind or to have a nature, something must meet certain collateral *constitutive conditions*. These are conditions that are necessary, sufficient, or necessary and sufficient to be something of that kind or with that nature, and that are in principle potentially relevant to explaining, understanding, illuminating the kind or nature (p. 58).

I'll restrict my attention here to just those constitutive conditions which are necessary. Drawing on what Burge says here, I'll understand a constitutive condition on knowledge (seeing) to be not any old necessary condition, but rather, a necessary condition which is connected to what knowledge (seeing) is (its nature). For instance, some necessary conditions on knowledge are simply not connected to what knowledge *is*. For instance, it is a necessary condition on knowing that p that $2 + 2 = 4$, but this is because $2 + 2 = 4$ is a necessary truth, it is nothing to do with what it is

to *know* that p (except in the special case where $p = 2 + 2 = 4$). I will assume that there are some conditions which are necessary for knowledge (seeing) because of what it is to know (see)—because of what the ‘being’ or ‘identity’ or ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ of knowledge (seeing) is. (For illuminating discussion on the notions of being, essence, etc, see Fine (1994a,b, 1995)).

To answer the question of explanation in the way I am recommending then requires us to look into the constitutive conditions of visual perception and knowledge. Let’s pause briefly to note that the idea that there are constitutive conditions on knowledge, as I’m understanding it, doesn’t entail that knowledge is reductively analyzable, in a non-circular way, in terms of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. If it did entail this then one might think that the assumption that there are constitutive conditions on knowledge is problematic (if, for example, one agrees with the worries Williamson (2000) raises for the traditional project of reductively analyzing knowledge).

But this isn’t entailed, for as Williamson notes

a necessary but insufficient condition need not be a conjunct of a non-circular necessary and sufficient condition. Although being coloured is a necessary but insufficient condition for being red, we cannot state a necessary and sufficient condition for being red by conjoining being coloured with other properties specified without reference to red. Neither the equation ‘Red = coloured + X ’ nor the equation ‘Knowledge = true belief + X ’ need have a non-circular solution (p. 3).

And what Williamson says here applies to constitutive conditions in my sense (a subspecies of necessary condition). For example, it might be that knowing that p constitutively requires S to have a true belief that p formed on the basis of a reliable belief forming mechanism. But this requirement can stand even if it is not an element of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which give a non-circular analysis of knowledge. Nothing I say in what follows will turn on whether knowledge can be reductively analyzed. Likewise, the idea that there are constitutive conditions on visual perception doesn’t entail that visual perception can be

reductively analyzed, in a non-circular way, in terms of a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. And nothing I say in what follows will turn on whether visual perception can be reductively analyzed in this way.

With these remarks in place let's return to the question of explanation. In giving an answer to the question of the form we have extracted from Peacocke's principles, we will be explaining why visual perception is a means of knowing in terms of the nature of visual perception, and the nature of knowledge (specifically, the epistemic dimension of the nature of knowledge). The idea then is that visual perception has a nature which is such as to link up with something relevant to the nature of knowledge. It is *not* that visual perception is itself a form of knowing (or sufficient for knowing). The constitutive connection between visual perception and knowledge does not have to be that tight. It is rather that visual perception has a nature which is such that seeing x can ensure that some of the constitutive (epistemic) conditions on knowledge are satisfied. And this is (part of) what explains how visual perception is a means of knowing. (I'll drop the 'part of' and 'partial' qualifications from now on, taking them to be understood).

To make good on this sort of explanation we need to consider what the relevant conditions on visual perception and knowledge are. I turn now to discuss what I take to be an important constitutive feature of knowledge.

4.3 Knowledge and Reasons

As noted in the Introduction I am going to try to support a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. Such an answer holds that it is of the nature of visual perception that it has a reason giving role. That means it can ensure the satisfaction of a reasons condition, which is constitutive of knowledge. The three crucial claims this sort of answer involves are, as I noted, these:

- (i) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition.

- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied.
- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

One author who is committed to these elements, and thus who has the resources at his disposal to answer the question of explanation in this way, is McDowell. I will spend a lot of time discussing McDowell's views. In McDowell's work (1) comes out of his commitment to a Sellarsian approach to knowledge (see Sellars (1956), the printing of Sellars's essay I shall refer to is in deVries, Triplett, and Sellars (2000)). Sellars says

...in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*... we are placing it in the logical space of reasons; of justifying and being able to justify what one says. (§36, p. 248).

This is a strand in Sellar's thinking that McDowell exploits in his own epistemology. In elaborating Sellar's idea McDowell says

If knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons, someone whose taking things to be thus and so is a case of knowledge must have a reason (a justification) for taking things to be that way (1993, p. 427).

Thus McDowell holds to (1), the reasons condition. In this section I'll briefly consider why (1) is well motivated. My aim is not to *establish* the reasons condition. I just want to show how such a condition is at least initially plausible. This will, I hope, give us enough to be going on with.

4.3.1 A Reasons Condition on Knowledge

Let's begin with the idea that knowing that p requires S to have an epistemic entitlement to believe that p . As I understand the notion, an epistemic entitlement to believe that p is an epistemic right to believe that p . Why think that knowledge is subject to such a requirement? This requirement seems plausible given these related facts: (i) knowledge has a normative dimension to it, and (ii) knowledge is distinct from true belief. By holding to the requirement that knowing that p requires S to

have an epistemic entitlement to believe that p , we can capture (i) and (ii). I'll elaborate on this, and then draw out its connection to the idea that knowledge is subject to a reasons condition.

Before continuing, a brief terminological note: Over ten years ago Pryor wrote: 'These days, unfortunately, the terminological situation with respect to 'justification' is rather messy' ((2001), p. 112). The same is true, today, of the terminological situation with respect to various other epistemic notions such as 'entitlement'. Burge (2003) for instance uses the notion in a specific way, and other authors (e.g., Brandom (1994), Dretske (2000a), McDowell (2002), Wright (2004), Peacocke (2004)) use it differently. At one point McDowell (2006a) makes the following complaint against Burge: 'Astonishingly, Burge writes (p. 504, n. 1) as if his "introduction" of "entitlement" used his way, in papers from 1993 and 1995, gave him some kind of patent on the term so that he can complain that different uses are "indiscriminate". My use is not indiscriminate, and the word, ordinary English as it is, is anyone's property. It can be used with complete naturalness in any "normative" epistemology' (p. 132, n. 4). If McDowell is right, then 'entitlement' should be an appropriate term to use in this context since we are trying to capture an aspect of knowledge in virtue of which it has some of the normative properties it does.

What then of the normative dimension of knowledge? Williams (2001) is helpful here. He says

'Knowledge' is an honorific title we confer on our paradigm cognitive achievements ... 'know' is a 'success-term' like 'win' or 'pass' (as test). Knowing is not just a factual state or condition but a particular *normative status*. Such statuses are related to appropriate factual states: winning depends on crossing the line before any other competitor. But they also depend on meeting certain norms or standards which define not what you *do* do, but what you *must* or *ought* to do. To characterize someone's claim as expressing or not expressing knowledge is to pass judgement on it. Epistemic judgements are thus a particular kind of *value-judgement* (p. 11).

To know that p is to be in a state with a certain positive normative status.

If one knows that p , one is doing well in a sense, relative to some set of standards or goals. It is typically thought that knowing that p requires doing well *epistemically*—doing well from an epistemic point of view, as opposed to, say, a moral or prudential point of view. Suppose there is ice cream in the freezer and I believe that there is ice cream in the freezer. Do I also know that there is ice cream in the freezer? This all depends, at least in part, upon what my *epistemic* credentials are, whether I am *epistemically well positioned* with respect to the proposition that there is ice cream in the freezer. (Compare: I just ran the race, and I crossed the finishing line. Did I win the race? This all depends upon how well I did, whether I did well enough to satisfy the standards for winning). We can capture this normative aspect of knowledge—that S 's knowing that p requires S to be epistemically well positioned with respect to p —quite naturally in terms of epistemic entitlement: to be epistemically well positioned with respect to p is to have an epistemic entitlement (right) to believe that p . What more can we say about epistemic entitlement?

To have an epistemic right to believe that p doesn't require one to actually believe that p . A court might present me with near conclusive evidence that a close friend of mine is guilty of committing a severe crime. On this basis I am entitled to believe that my friend is guilty of committing the crime. But perhaps, because of the emotional and moral bearing it would have on me, I just *don't believe* that my friend committed the crime. I don't exploit the good epistemic position I am in thanks to the epistemic entitlement I have. So, epistemic entitlements are like some other sorts of right. I may have a legal right to a certain inheritance, but refuse to accept that inheritance.

The idea of doing well *epistemically*, and thus of *epistemic* entitlement, is constitutively tied to the idea of *truth*. This is difficult to spell out precisely, I'll offer a couple of remarks which might at least give some sense of what I intend. Something Dretske (2000a) says here is instructive. He says

If an entitlement—[to believe that P]—is an *epistemic* right, one would suppose that the only thing that could confer that right is a relation to the truth (or probable truth) of P —the fact, for instance, that there is something about the belief it-

self, or, perhaps, the process by which it (or beliefs like it) are acquired—that guarantees, or makes more probable, the truth of P. Why else call it an “epistemic” right? There may be a variety of interests served in accepting something as true. One might have prudential or religious reasons for accepting P as true (e.g., he will skin me alive if I don’t believe it) that are quite independent of the truth of P. If these reasons are strong enough, they might give one a right—religious or prudential as the case may—to believe. If one’s interest in accepting P as true is to be regarded as *epistemic*, though, one would think the primary—indeed, the *only*—grounds for that right would be the truth, or probable truth, of P (p. 594).

Dretske goes on to reject the idea that it is *only* with a relation to the truth or probable truth of *p* that an epistemic entitlement can come about. But it is surely right to suppose that *some* entitlement conferring states, episodes, etc, get to confer genuinely *epistemic* entitlements to believe that *p* thanks to a relation they bear to the truth or probable truth of *p*. Consider also what Burge (2003) offers in introducing his notions of epistemic warrant and entitlement

Entitlement is a subspecies of epistemic warrant. Epistemic warrant, hence entitlement, is an epistemic good. The *epistemic* good, warrant, is essentially associated with the fundamental *representational* good—truth. The notion of an epistemic good must be understood in relation to this fundamental representational good. Although truth is fundamentally a representational good, it is also an epistemic good, because belief, warrant, and knowledge are a priori connected with truth... The epistemic goods *warrant* and *entitlement* are fulfillments of norms associated with achieving the representational good, truth (pp. 504–505).

The epistemic entitlements I am interested in here are *epistemic* in that they are essentially connected to truth. That is not to say that if *S* is epistemically entitled to believe that *p* then *p* is true. But if *S* is epistemically entitled to believe that *p* then *S* is at least doing well from the

perspective of truth, doing well as a seeker of truth, well positioned to get to the truth. States, occurrences, and the like which confer epistemic entitlements to believe that p do so in virtue of a connection they bear to the truth or probable truth of p (e.g., an entitlement conferring state ϕ might make p very likely to be true).

Let's return to an example from above. Suppose that I believe that there is ice cream in the freezer. Having this belief might constitute a case of "doing well" relative to various non-epistemic (non-truth related) standards. For instance, suppose I am an ice cream addict, and I can only sleep at night if I am assured, and believe, that there is ice cream in the freezer (for otherwise when trying to sleep I will panic about what to do when I wake up in the middle of the night craving the next hit of Cornish). Now suppose one evening I am unable to leave the house, and really need to have a good night's sleep (suppose I have to be up early for something important in the morning). But I look in the freezer, search indeed, and I can find no ice cream. (In fact, unbeknownst to me, someone has stolen my ice cream). This sends me into a bit of panic. I try to get friends to bring me some ice cream, but to no avail. Practically, a sleepless night just simply isn't an option for me, so eventually I bring myself to believe that *there is some ice cream in the freezer*. In my panic I manage somehow to convince myself of this. The belief is formed unintentionally out of desperation and wishful thinking, perhaps with some questionable reasoning (it is a "coping mechanism"). But it *is* formed. I become *confident* that there is ice cream in the freezer. (I eventually get a call from a friend, who asks if I have ice cream and offers to bring some round if not, but by this stage I have convinced myself that there is some in the freezer so I tell them not to worry about it). My belief is irrational in a certain sense, it is a sort of self-deception. But it is *practically* very rational, and helps me to get a good night's sleep. Relative to my short-term practical interests (getting a good night's sleep) I have good prudential reason to believe that there is ice cream in the freezer. By *these standards* believing that there is ice cream in the freezer counts as 'doing well'. But, intuitively, it is not a case of doing well in an epistemic sense, by epistemic standards. I am not *epistemically* well positioned with respect to the proposition: *there is some ice cream in the freezer*; I don't have an *epistemic* entitlement to believe it. I am not doing well as a seeker of truth.

In one version of this case my belief is false and so obviously doesn't count as knowledge. But we can modify the case like this: suppose that the thieves had missed a tiny tub of "Ben & Jerry's" when they robbed my freezer of ice cream. This is because it was hidden in a bag of frozen peas. When I searched the freezer for ice cream, this bag seemed to be sealed up. So from what I could tell, from my otherwise very thorough search, there was just no ice cream in the freezer. Still, as in the first case, through panic and desperation I come to believe that there is ice cream in the freezer. This time the belief is true. But intuitively it fails to count as knowledge, and this is at least partly because I am (still) not epistemically well positioned with respect to the content: *there is ice cream in the freezer*; I don't have an epistemic entitlement to believe that content. The disconnect between the basis of my belief and the truth (or even probable truth) of my belief means that in having the belief, even though it is true, I am not doing well as a seeker of truth.

This sort of consideration strongly suggests that being epistemically well positioned, having an epistemic entitlement, is at least part of what distinguishes knowledge from true belief. This sort of verdict is widely accepted—though often in different terms and from different angles. For it is widely believed that true belief is not sufficient for knowledge precisely because true belief can be present in the absence of the satisfaction of certain epistemic conditions which knowledge requires the satisfaction of—conditions I am trying to capture, in a rough way, in terms of epistemic entitlement. (Though see Sartwell (1991, 1992) who thinks that true belief is sufficient for knowledge).

The suggestion, as I intend it, is not that being epistemically entitled to believe that p is a condition we can add to true belief to obtain a non-circular set of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. The point is rather this: having an epistemic right to believe that p is a constitutive condition on knowing that p , but it is not even a necessary condition on believing that p (even truly believing that p), it is thus part of what captures how knowledge is distinct from true belief. (This point is consistent with the idea that it isn't possible to work out what being epistemically entitled to believe that p is without reference to knowledge).

It seems plausible, then, to suppose that for S to know that p , S has to have an epistemic entitlement to believe that p . This, it seems to me, is (i)

a way of capturing the crucial normative dimension which is constitutive of knowledge, and (ii) part of how we can capture the (or one sort of) difference between knowledge and true belief.

What has this got to do with the reasons condition on knowledge—the idea that *S*'s knowing that *p* requires *S* to have good reasons to believe that *p*? An epistemic reason to believe that *p* is, intuitively, a consideration which supports or somehow indicates that *p* is true, and so a consideration which counts in favour of the belief that *p*. If one is in possession of good reasons to believe that *p*, that is, thus, just a way of being epistemically well positioned with respect to *p*. That is, to have good reasons to believe that *p* is a way of being epistemically entitled to believe that *p*. (This shows how the notion of 'epistemic entitlement' I am working with here is much more liberal than the notion used by, say, Burge, and Dretske, who aim to exploit a certain disconnect between being entitled and having reasons). Thus endorsing the reasons condition on knowledge gives one a principled way of spelling out how the entitlement condition on knowledge gets satisfied in cases of knowledge. It is thus a way of capturing (i) the crucial normative dimension of knowledge, and the related fact that (ii) knowledge is distinct from true belief.

This gives some sort of initial motivation for endorsing a reasons condition. It is, obviously, nowhere near a decisive or complete motivation for the condition. For presumably there are other ways of having epistemic entitlement, ways which don't hinge upon the reasons one has. And it might be that insofar as there is an epistemic entitlement condition on knowledge it is best worked out in some way that doesn't make reference to reasons, e.g., in terms of modal conditions on knowledge (such as reliability (Goldman (1986)), or sensitivity (Dretske (1971), Nozick (1981)), safety (Sosa (1999), Williamson (2000))). It could be of course that modal conditions can work together with a reasons condition, in an account of what it is for one to be epistemically well positioned. But I just want to articulate why the reasons condition might seem initially attractive. Having done so, one then has reason to take seriously direct challenges to it. If it can survive such challenges it will look even more attractive. Later I will attempt to defend the condition from those who think it can't be a condition on perceptual knowledge.

As I noted above, one author who has the resources at his disposal to offer a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation is McDowell. Once again here are the three components of a Reasons Answer:

- (1) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition.
- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied.
- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

We've seen that McDowell endorses (1), which is initially plausible (there is more on the form (1) takes in McDowell's work in section (4.6) below). Let's turn now to McDowell's endorsement of (2) and (3). I begin with a discussion of McDowell's views on the nature of perception.

4.4 McDowell on Perception

I'll begin with the view of perception McDowell offers in *Mind and World*, and then move on to the elaboration of this view we find in "The Woodbridge Lectures: Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality". These are core works which give us what we might call McDowell's *early view* of perception. In more recent work McDowell has changed his mind on some issues (see, e.g., McDowell (2008a)). Such work gives us McDowell's *later view* on perception. My main concern is with McDowell's early view (I'll discuss the later view briefly later). The crucial task is to see how for McDowell it is of the nature of visual perception that it has a reason giving role. It is because McDowell does think of visual perception in this way that his work can be exploited in a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation.

In the work I'm going to consider in this section McDowell talks of perceptual experience, and is usually interested just in "Good" cases (that is, cases where one is perceiving). I'll follow him in this in outlining his account, but later I'll switch back to our more specific focus: seeing.

The way of thinking of perception McDowell recommends is first presented as an antidote to a pair of unsatisfactory, yet tempting, positions,

which, McDowell thinks, we are prone to oscillate between. I'll begin by discussing this set up (see (4.4.1)–(4.4.2)). For helpful critical discussion of this set up, see, e.g., Brandom (1996), Byrne (1996), and Wright (1996). I'll then discuss the view of perception McDowell puts forward in the light of this set up (see (4.4.3)). I'll then pause to point out how McDowell's view of perception is relevant to giving a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation (see section (4.4.4)). Finally, I'll round off the discussion of McDowell's view of perception by discussing how it can be understood to give us an account of seeing as we ordinarily understand it—which is necessary if it is to play a role in answering the question of explanation (see section (4.5))

4.4.1 Minimal Empiricism

We can begin with the view that McDowell, in the Introduction to *Mind and World*, calls 'minimal empiricism' (p. xi). The view is that 'experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as thinking at all' (p. xii). The idea is that it is a condition of the possibility of empirical thought—thought about the world—that experience can stand in justificatory relations to instances of empirical thinking. Experiences which can stand in justificatory relations to empirical beliefs must be able to provide reasons for those beliefs.

The thesis of minimal empiricism comes about in the following way. We start with the idea that it is somehow constitutive of empirical thought that it is answerable to the world, or, as McDowell also puts it, answerable to how things are. This is what McDowell wants to capture when he states that the 'relation between mind and world is normative' (p. xii). This is required, McDowell thinks, to make sense of the idea that empirical thought has empirical representational content, that it has a certain sort of intentionality—that empirical thinking is 'directed towards to world', or 'about the world', or has 'objective purport' (on this last notion see McDowell (1998b)). Since there is no such thing as empirical thinking or empirical thought without such representational content (1994, p. 4), the idea that empirical thought is answerable to the world, is required to make sense of empirical thought *per se*.

This is not yet minimal empiricism, since no mention is made of perceptual *experience*. But McDowell thinks that we can't understand how empirical thinking could be answerable to the world except by way of the idea that 'our thinking is answerable to experience' (p. xii). And, finally, McDowell urges, this requires us to think of experience as a tribunal which 'stands in judgement' over our empirical thinking (p. xii), as a rational constraint on empirical thinking (which is to say it requires us to think of experience as having a reason giving role). Putting the pieces together we get the thesis of minimal empiricism as a condition of the possibility of empirical thought.

McDowell often gives expression to minimal empiricism in both Kantian and Sellarsian jargon (see Kant (1781/1787), and Sellars (1956), and see especially McDowell (1994), §2; and for a development of the framework he develops in these terms see McDowell (1998d)). In the Kantian idiom, minimal empiricism is the thesis that contributions from the "faculty of understanding", or exercises of "spontaneity" in empirical thought (that is: exercises of conceptual capacities in making empirical judgements) must be subject to rational constraint from "the faculty of sensibility", "sensible intuition", or "receptivity" (that is: perceptual experience). In the Sellarsian idiom, minimal empiricism is the thesis that both empirical thinking (what is in the "space of concepts") and perceptual experience must be enclosed in "the space of reasons"—the space in which things stand in rational relations.

4.4.2 The Myth of the Given and Coherentism

McDowell has more to say about experience than that it must have a reason giving role if empirical thought is to be possible. He thinks that this demands a particular understanding of the nature of experience. In particular he thinks that experience can have such an epistemic role—and so we can satisfy minimal empiricism—only if experience is conceptual (for similar arguments see Brewer (1999, 2005)). This view emerges out of a consideration of two allegedly unsatisfactory positions which McDowell thinks we are prone to oscillate between. Let's consider this set up now.

The first position tries to satisfy minimal empiricism. It admits that experience serves as a rational constraint on empirical thinking. But on

this position empirical thinking is rationally constrained from *outside* the conceptual sphere. McDowell (1994) outlines the idea as follows:

The putatively reassuring idea is that empirical justifications have an ultimate foundation in impingements on the conceptual realm from outside. So the space of reasons is made out to be more extensive than the space of concepts. Suppose we are tracing the ground, the justification for a belief or a judgement. The idea is that when we have exhausted all the available moves within the space of concepts, all the available moves from one conceptually organized item to another [e.g., moves which exploit rational relations between beliefs], there is still one more step we can take: namely, pointing to something that is simply received in experience. It can only be pointing, because *ex hypothesi* this last move in a justification comes after we have exhausted the possibilities of tracing grounds from one conceptually organized, and so articulable, item to another (p. 6).

What we have here is an appeal to the idea of the Given, an idea which McDowell describes as follows:

The idea of the Given is the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons is supposed to allow it to incorporate non-conceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought (p. 7).

But, McDowell thinks, this is a *Myth*. For ‘we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgement is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities’ (p. 7).

We have here, in the position we are considering, an instance of what Sellars (1956) famously attacked—the Myth of the Given. Experience conceived in this way is not fit for the purpose of satisfying minimal empiricism. Experience understood as such can ensure that the world is

causally efficacious with respect to our thinking, but it cannot ensure that there is the sort of *rational* connection that the minimal empiricist hankers after:

[W]hen we make out that the space of reasons is more extensive than the conceptual sphere, so that it can incorporate extra-conceptual impingements from the world, the result is a picture in which constraint from outside is exerted at the outer boundary of the expanded space of reasons, in what we are committed to depicting as a brute impact from the exterior. Now perhaps the picture secures that we cannot be blamed for what happens at the outer boundary, and hence that we cannot be blamed for the inward influence of what happens there. What happens there is the result of an alien force, the causal impact of the world, operating outside the control of our spontaneity. But it is one thing to be exempt from blame, on the ground that the position we find ourselves in can be traced ultimately to brute force; it is quite another thing to have a justification. In effect, the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications (p. 8).

So one of the two allegedly unsatisfactory positions McDowell thinks we are prone to oscillate between is a vain appeal to the Given. That is not to say that there is no attraction to this appeal. For the appeal is made in the hope of satisfying minimal empiricism. The freedom we have to exercise concepts in thought (“spontaneity”) must be subject to ‘control from outside our thinking, on pain of representing the operations of spontaneity as a frictionless spinning in a void’ (p. 11). And McDowell concedes that the temptation of appealing to the Given is that the Given ‘seems to supply that external control’ (p. 11). But in McDowell’s eyes it is not a workable position.

As McDowell sees things, rejecting the appeal to the Given can propel us towards an equally unsatisfactory position. This alternative position shares the idea that experiences relate only causally to empirical thinking. But the alternative endorses a consequence of this, and urges that we give up on the idea that experience can constitute a tribunal which stands in judgement on empirical thinking. It gives up on minimal empiricism.

McDowell casts Davidson (1986) as a proponent of this position. Davidson thinks of experience, as McDowell puts it, as ‘nothing but an extra-conceptual impact on sensibility’ (p. 14). And so he excludes experience from the space of reasons. On Davidson’s view, ‘experience is causally relevant to a subject’s beliefs and judgements, but it has no bearing on their status as justified or warranted’ (p. 14).

We can’t, Davidson thinks, take experience to be a source of justification. Instead Davidson recommends a coherence theory on which any justification there might be for a given belief is somehow confined to its relation to other beliefs—and nothing else. Davidson says that

[w]hat distinguishes a coherence theory is simply the claim that nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief. Its partisan rejects as unintelligible the request for a ground or source of justification of another ilk (p. 310).

Appealing to the Given is one way of requesting a source of justification of another ilk. Davidson, in endorsing the coherence theory, professes to find this unintelligible, and as we’ve seen McDowell finds it unsatisfactory. But McDowell thinks that to endorse a Davidsonian coherence theory, as a reaction against the Myth of the Given, is to recoil into an equally unsatisfactory position. McDowell notes that

Davidson recoils from the Myth of the Given all the way to denying experience any justificatory role, and the coherentist upshot is a version of the conception of spontaneity as frictionless, the very thing that makes the idea of the Given attractive. This is just one of the movements in the oscillation that I have spoken of. There is nothing to prevent it from triggering the familiar recoil in its turn. (p. 14).

The last sentence here reflects why McDowell finds Davidson’s position unsatisfactory. Davidson’s position does nothing to address the temptation there is in appealing to the Given. McDowell goes on

Davidson’s picture depicts our empirical thinking as engaged in with no rational constraint, but only causal influence, from outside. This just raises a worry as to whether the picture

can accommodate the sort of bearing on reality that empirical content amounts to, and this is just the kind of worry that can make an appeal to the Given seem necessary. And Davidson does nothing to allay the worry. I think we should be suspicious of his bland confidence that empirical content can be intelligible in our picture even though we carefully stipulate that the world's impacts on our senses have nothing to do with justification (pp. 14–15)

McDowell thinks we need to take minimal empiricism seriously. Appealing to the Given is one way to do that—a bad way, as it turns out. But the Davidsonian alternative, recoiling from the Given, just rejects minimal empiricism. McDowell's problem with this is that 'Davidson does nothing to undermine the thought that minimal empiricism, which he rejects, is a necessary condition for empirical content to be anything but mysterious' (1996, p. 287). Given this, 'Davidson undermines his right to the idea... of a body of beliefs' (1994, p. 18). But a coherence theory certainly needs to make sense of the idea of a body of beliefs.

Thus McDowell thinks that Davidson's position is not satisfactory. Instead of being the comfortable resting point Davidson supposes it is, it is, rather, apt to be just one part of an oscillation between unsatisfactory positions. To escape the oscillation, to 'dismount the seesaw' (p. 9), McDowell thinks, requires us to 'avoid the Myth of the Given without renouncing the claim that experience is a rational constraint on thinking' (p. 18). This is where McDowell's conception of perceptual experience as conceptual comes in, as a way of dismounting the seesaw. I turn to this now.

4.4.3 Perceptual Experience as Conceptual

By conceiving of perceptual experience as within the space of concepts, we can, contra the coherentist, hold on to the minimal empiricist idea that our empirical thinking is subject to rational constraint from outside. But we don't fall prey to the Myth of the Given. We are not imagining, in vain, that the space of reasons extends beyond the space of concepts. As McDowell says

This [thinking of experience as conceptual] makes room for a different notion of givenness, one that is innocent of the confusion between justification and exculpation. Now we need not try to make out that the space of reasons is more extensive than the space of concepts. When we trace the ground for an empirical judgement, the last step takes us to experiences. Experiences already have conceptual content, so this last step does not take us outside the space of concepts. But it takes us to something in which sensibility—receptivity—is operative, so we need no longer be unnerved by the freedom implicit in the idea that our conceptual capacities belong to a faculty of spontaneity. We need not worry that our picture leaves out the external constraint that is required if exercises of our conceptual capacities are to be recognizable as bearing on the world at all (p. 10).

Insofar as McDowell thinks of experience as conceptual, he has no time for a view of experience which thinks of it as necessarily involving conceptualization of some non-conceptual deliverances of receptivity. Rather,

The relevant conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity... It is not that they are exercised *on* an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity. We should understand what Kant calls “intuition”—experiential intake—not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content. In experience, one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge (p. 9).

For McDowell ‘receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation [between receptivity and spontaneity]’ (p. 9). There isn’t, for McDowell, a mode of receptivity which is both non-conceptual and which constitutes experience.

But what, in a more positive light, does McDowell’s conceptualist position amount to? The essentials of an answer to this question are contained in the passage above. Namely, experience has *conceptual content*,

and involves the operation of *conceptual capacities*. To understand these elements of McDowell's view, and thus to understand McDowell's conceptualism about experience, I think it will be useful to draw on a distinction between two ways of understanding conceptualism and nonconceptualism that we find in the literature. Holding to this distinction, as we'll see, opens up the space of possible positions regarding whether or not experience is conceptual. The point of looking into this aspect of the current literature is to get into a position whereby we can place McDowell's view as one among a range of (seeming) options. This will, I hope, help us to achieve a better understanding of McDowell's view.

What, then, is the distinction between ways of understanding conceptualism and nonconceptualism that I mentioned? In discussing Evans (1982) who introduced the notion of 'nonconceptual content' to us, Stalnaker (1998) says

Some things Evans says suggest that it is mental states, rather than their contents, that are conceptual or nonconceptual...but it is clear that he thinks that there are two kinds of content, and not just two kinds of states that content is used to characterize, or two ways in which content might be expressed (p. 95).

And consider the following from Heck (2000), also discussing Evans, who notes that on a "state view" of perception as nonconceptual

Perception is just a state of a different sort from belief: a nonconceptual, or concept-independent, state, as opposed to a conceptual, or concept-dependent, state. [But Evan's view was] what we might call "the content view," that the content of perceptual states is different in kind from that of cognitive states like belief. The former is non-conceptual; the latter, conceptual (p. 485).

These remarks encourage the idea that there are two ways of understanding the idea that perception is conceptual (or nonconceptual). Take the conceptualist thesis. On the one hand this might be understood as a thesis about perceptual states. Accordingly, perceptual states are

concept-dependent states. But on the other hand it might be understood as a thesis about the contents of those states. Accordingly, perceptual states have conceptual contents. Now take the nonconceptualist thesis. This might be understood as a thesis about perceptual states. Accordingly, perceptual states are concept-*in*dependent. But on the other hand it might be understood as a thesis about the contents of those states. Accordingly, perceptual states have nonconceptual contents. It seems, then, that there are two ways to understand the thesis of conceptualism and two ways to understand the thesis of nonconceptualism. There is state-(non)conceptualism, and content-(non)conceptualism. (For closely related distinctions between ways of understanding the idea that perception is conceptual (or nonconceptual) see Speaks (2005), and Crowther (2006). For discussion which reflects upon these distinctions see, e.g., Byrne (2005), Bermúdez (2007), Toribio (2008), Bermúdez and Cahen (2012), and Duhau (Forthcoming)).

But what, if anything, is the substance of this distinction? On the face of it if a perceptual state has conceptual content then it *is* a concept-dependent state. And we might wonder what else it could be for a state to be concept-dependent other than by having a conceptual content. Likewise, on the face of it if a perceptual state is nonconceptual then it is a concept-independent state. And we might wonder what else it could be for a state to be concept-independent other than by having a nonconceptual content. If there is a distinction here it is a subtle one and in need of some motivation.

Let's start with the idea that a perceptual state has representational content. Thus, suppose that *S* has a visual experience as of a red cube. This experience represents things as being a certain way to *S* (for instance, it represents to *S* the presence of a red cube in her environment). It does so in virtue of the representational content it possesses. We can specify the content in propositional terms, e.g., *S* visually experiences *that the cube is red* (or *that there is a red cube there*). We *specify* the content of *S*'s experience using concepts, but, as is typically pointed out, that doesn't speak to whether or not the content of *S*'s experience is itself conceptual. What then would it mean to suppose that *S*'s experience has a conceptual content? Typically we find this expressed in terms of the idea that experience has content of a kind which can also be the content of judge-

ment and belief. And this, it is supposed, is content somehow *composed* exclusively of concepts. Peacocke (2001) expresses this line of thought as follows

We need to be very clear what we mean by ‘conceptual’. I shall be taking it that conceptual content is content of a kind that can be the content of judgment and belief. Concepts are constituents of those intentional contents which can be the complete, truth-evaluable, contents of judgment and belief. Conceptual content and concepts I take to have identities conforming to, indeed answerable to, Gottlob Frege’s criterion of identity for senses. Complete contents p and q are distinct if and only if it is possible for someone for whom the question arises rationally to judge that p without judging that q , and even while judging not- q . So the content ‘This country is Italy’ is distinct from the content ‘This country is this country’; the content ‘The floor-plan is square’ is distinct from ‘The floor-plan is a regular diamond’; the content ‘Your lost pen is there’ (pointing under a pile of papers) is distinct from ‘Your lost pen is where you last used it’. Concepts C and D are distinct if and only if there is some completing content Σ such that complete content $\Sigma(C)$ is distinct from the complete content $\Sigma(D)$... (p. 243).

Conceptual content, understood as such, is propositional, and so truth-evaluable content which is built up exclusively out of concepts (understood in terms of Fregean senses). If one thinks that experience has non-conceptual content, one will deny that the content it has is built up out of concepts. This leaves it open what the nature of the (nonconceptual) content of experience is. (For different views on this see, for instance, Peacocke (1992a,b), Stalnaker (1998), and Tye (1995, 2000, 2005, 2006)).

I intend these brief remarks to give a sense of what it would be to endorse *content*-conceptualism, or *content*-nonconceptualism. But do they help us to get clear on the *distinction* between state- and content-(non)conceptualism? One might wonder about this, for if experience has conceptual content, in the sense specified, then surely perceptual states will be, by definition, concept-dependent states. And

if experience has nonconceptual content, in the sense specified, then surely perceptual states will be, by definition, concept-independent states—at least with respect to their contents. If this is right, it looks like content-(non)conceptualism entails state-(non)conceptualism.

But in the literature, we find a more specific suggestion as to what it is for a perceptual state to be concept-dependent (or concept-independent) whereby this *isn't* simply read off from what the nature of the content of the state is. The idea is that a state is concept-dependent just if in order to be in the state the subject of the state needs to *possess the concepts* relevant to specifying the content of the state; it is concept-independent otherwise. Suppose then that I have an experience as of a red cube before me. Now whatever the nature of the content of this experience—whether it be conceptual or nonconceptual—we can, from a third-person perspective, *specify* its content using concepts, e.g., CUBE, RED, etc. This experience is *state-conceptual* just if in order for me to undergo it I must *possess* those concepts relevant to specifying the content (RED, CUBE, etc). It is *state-nonconceptual* otherwise.

Whether an experience is state-conceptual (or nonconceptual), understood in this way—that is, understood in terms of concept *possession*—is supposed to be logically independent of whether an experience is content-conceptual (or nonconceptual) (understood as above in terms of the constitution of the content). According to the distinction I am trying to explicate the logical space of options thus includes four positions, two pure positions, and two mixed positions (this comes out very nicely, though in different terms, in the discussions in Speaks (2005), and Crowther (2006)). The pure positions we have are: *pure conceptualism* (content-conceptualism + state conceptualism), and *pure nonconceptualism* (content-nonconceptualism + state-nonconceptualism). And the mixed positions we have are, first of all, content-nonconceptualism + state-conceptualism, and second, content-conceptualism + state-nonconceptualism.

According to pure conceptualism, experience is conceptual in two ways (or, if one prefers, there are two aspects to the way in which experience is conceptual). It involves conceptual content, and any given experience is such that in order to undergo it, its subject must possess the concepts relevant to specifying its content (the concepts which con-

stitute its content). According to pure nonconceptualism, experience is nonconceptual in two ways (or, if one prefers, there are two aspects to the way in which experience is nonconceptual). It involves nonconceptual content, and to undergo an experience its subject doesn't need to possess the concepts relevant to specifying the nonconceptual content it has. I take it that these pure positions are obviously possible positions to take regarding whether experience is conceptual or nonconceptual.

What about the mixed positions? On the first such position the content of experience is nonconceptual (it is not composed of concepts). Yet in order for one to undergo an experience with such a content one must possess the concepts relevant to specifying that content. So if I have a visual experience as of a red cube, the content of my experience is not composed of concepts (perhaps it is a structure involving objects (a cube) and properties (being red, being cubic) instead—at least if it is an experience in which I am not misled). But, on this position, in order to undergo such an experience I have to possess the concepts relevant to specifying that nonconceptual content (e.g., the colour concept RED).

A natural question arises for such a position. Namely, given that the experience has nonconceptual content, *why* is the possession of concepts relevant to characterizing the nonconceptual content required by a subject for that subject to undergo the experience? That is a relevant question for anyone wanting to defend this mixed position. But we don't need to answer that question, I take it, in order to see that this is a *possible position*.

What of the other mixed position? On this second position experience has conceptual content, that is, content built up out of concepts. Yet in order to undergo such a conceptually contentful experience, a subject does *not* need to possess the concepts which constitute the content of the experience. But how can we make sense of the idea that the content of one's experience is conceptual when one doesn't possess the concepts which go into composing the content?

Crowther (2006) tries to make sense of the idea in the following way. We start with the idea that experience, when one is not misled, 'is a mode of perceptual sensitivity to conceptually composed facts: to judgeable or thinkable aspects of the layout of the world' (p. 256). In the case of us mature human beings, perceptual sensitivity is mediated by the concep-

tual capacities we possess. For us, when the fact that *a* is *F* is the content of an experience it is, we can suppose, in part thanks to our possession of the concepts pertaining to *a* and *F* which compose that content, for that content gets to be the content of an experience partly in virtue of the actualization of conceptual capacities in experience (those same capacities which can be exercised so as we could, say, *judge*, that *a* is *F*). However, Crowther suggests, a creature which lacks those concepts can still have an experience with the conceptually composed content that *a* is *F*. In the case of such a creature it is obviously not thanks to the employment of concepts which compose that content that it gets to have such a conceptually contentful experience. How does it get to have such an experience then? Crowther says

In animals, perceptual sensitivity to facts involves the drawing on, in combination, of capacities for reliable differential response to the relevant aspects of the world. In general, suppose, a creature is enabled to undergo a perceptual experience with the conceptually composed fact *that a is F* as its content when the event he undergoes results from the combined activation of capacities to respond differentially to something's being *a* and something's being *F* (p. 256).

So the idea is that it is not necessary to draw on conceptual capacities in order to manifest perceptual sensitivity to conceptually composed facts. Reliable differential responsiveness to aspects of the world can play that role too. And this is how a creature can come to be in a state with conceptual content even if it doesn't possess the concepts which constitute that content. Crowther sums up the mixed position in the following way. On the mixed position we are considering

the content of the perceptual experience of a nonlinguistic infant or animal is just the same compositionally conceptual content that we mature human beings can be perceptually sensitive to in our own conceptually mediated way. *That there is a fly at such and such a position* is a conceptually composed content that we, as well as the frog, can be open to in experience when circumstances are right. On this view, that is just to say

that the worldly fact *that there is a fly at such and such a position* is something that both ourselves, and the frog, can enjoy a mode of perceptual sensitivity to. What differs across ourselves and the frog is not the factual content of our perceptual experience, but what is involved in our respective modes of access to it (p. 257).

We might ask the following questions of this defence of the coherence of the second mixed position. What is it to be reliably differentially responsive to some aspect of the world? Does such responsiveness already involve, in some sense, a level of conceptual content (e.g., in being responsive to something's being *F*)? If so, and given the hypothesis that the creatures who are responsive in this way don't possess concepts, are we already assuming the coherence of the position that invoking reliable differential responsiveness was supposed to help us to see the coherence of? If the responsiveness *doesn't* involve a level of conceptual content, then how can it add up to perceptual sensitivity to *conceptually composed facts*—as opposed to facts understood in some nonconceptual way?

Perhaps there are these questions outstanding, but I don't want to pursue the question of whether the mixed positions we have considered really are coherent or worthy workable positions. There is, I think, at least a *prima facie* case that they are, and that is enough for my purposes. For the point of going through some of these details is that it will help us to appreciate what McDowell's position is more clearly and distinctly—for we will be able to appreciate how McDowell's position contrasts with some (seemingly) possible positions.

What then, is McDowell's position? As I understand it, McDowell endorses *pure conceptualism*. He thinks that experience has conceptual content, and that having a perceptual experience requires the possession of the concepts which compose the content of the experience. Regarding the first commitment, McDowell (1994) states

In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is *that things are thus and so*. *That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement: it becomes the content of a judgement if the

subject decides to take the experience at face value. So it is conceptual content (p. 26).

I take it that McDowell thinks of conceptual content as content which is composed of concepts understood in terms of Fregean senses (see e.g., McDowell (1994), pp. 179–180). And we shouldn't forget that for McDowell (1984, 1986) aspects of the world, objects and the like, can figure in Fregean senses such that there can be object-dependent Fregean senses. This distinguishes McDowell's position from pure nonconceptualism, and the first of the mixed positions considered above—since on those positions experience doesn't have conceptual content.

McDowell's position is also to be distinguished from the second of the mixed positions considered above. For McDowell thinks that in order to have an experience with conceptual content one has to possess the concepts which constitute the content. This is because he thinks that having experience, understood as such, essentially involves the actualization of conceptual capacities—capacities associated with components of the conceptual content in question. That experience involves the actualization of conceptual capacities is something he emphasizes in his response to a paper by Collins (1998). He writes as follows:

Collins says: "It is not clear enough just what it means to say that experience is itself 'conceptual'." Let me try to be clearer. Start with the idea of conceptual capacities. In the relevant sense, conceptual capacities are capacities whose paradigmatic actualizations are exercises of them in judgment, which is the end—both aim and culmination—of the controlled self-critical activity of making up one's mind. We identify the relevant range of capacities by considering their role in that activity. But then we can extend the idea of actualizations of that range of capacities beyond the active exercises that define them as the kind of capacities they are. What it means to say that experience is itself conceptual is that experience is an actualization, in sensory consciousness, of capacities that are defined as the kind of capacities they are by their role in active self-critical thinking. (Of course

experience is not a case of that.) The character of the capacities is fixed by considering cases in which it is up to a subject which of them she exercises. But the very same capacities can be actualized, outside the control of the subject, in the receptivity of sensibility (1998c, p. 410)

Here McDowell tells us that experience is conceptual in that it involves the actualization of conceptual capacities. He also tells us about what conceptual capacities are—how their identity is tied to their role in judgement, and thus active self-critical thinking. McDowell thinks that we could not hold that ‘the capacities that are in play in experience are conceptual if they were manifested only in experience... They would not be recognizable as conceptual capacities at all unless they could also be exercised in active thinking [e.g., judgement]...’ (1994, p. 11).

So McDowell thinks that in experience the capacities paradigmatically associated with judgement are in play. This is not to *equate* experience with judgement. Clearly, for McDowell, experience is only possible for creatures capable of judging (active thinking). But experience isn’t itself a sort of judgement. McDowell makes clear that conceptual capacities are *actualized* as opposed to *exercised* in experience. McDowell notes that ‘[i]t sounds off key in this connection to speak of *exercising* conceptual capacities at all’ (p. 10). The same conceptual capacities actualized in a experience with the content that *p*, are, to be sure, exercised or actively employed by a subject in judging that *p*. But that is a sort of activity, and ‘experience is passive. In experience one finds oneself saddled with content. One’s conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, in the content’s being available to one, before one has any choice in the matter’ (p. 10). And another way in which experience is to be distinguished from judging, for McDowell, is that when it comes to experience conceptual capacities are actualized *in sensory consciousness*. Such capacities are actualized as part of the world’s appearing some way to one, or being sensorily present to one (or at least seeming to be), not as part of one’s making one’s mind up about some matter in thought. (More on this below).

On the second of the mixed positions discussed above, an experience has conceptual content, but doesn’t require its subject to possess the con-

cepts which compose that content. I said above that insofar as conceptual capacities are actualized in experience, McDowell's position is distinct from this position. The basis for this claim is that for McDowell the conceptual capacities involved in an experience with the content that *p* will be capacities pertaining to the concepts which constitute *p*, and part of what it is to have such capacities is to possess those concepts. This idea doesn't get spelled out fully in *Mind and World*, but it becomes clearer in "The Woodbridge Lectures: Having the World in View: Sellars, Kant, and Intentionality".

In those lectures McDowell discusses an example in which one has a visual experience with the content: *that there is a red cube there (in front of one)*. Having an experience with such a content involves the actualization of specific conceptual capacities, with a specific mode of togetherness. The *same* conceptual capacities and the *same* mode of togetherness as would be present in a *judgement* with that same content. Here is how McDowell describes the situation for judgement:

Consider, say, judging that there is a red cube in front of one. There is a conceptual capacity that would be exercised both in making that judgment and in judging that there is a red pyramid in front of one, and another conceptual capacity that would be exercised both in judging that there is a red cube in front of one and in judging that there is a blue cube in front of one. In judging that there is a red cube in front of one, one would be exercising (at least) these two capacities together. What does "together" mean here? Not just that one would be exercising the two capacities in a single act of judgment; that would not distinguish judging that there is a red cube in front of one from judging, say, that there is a red pyramid and a blue cube in front of one. In a judgement that there is a red cube in front of one, the two conceptual capacities I have singled out would have to be exercised with a specific mode of togetherness: a togetherness that is a counterpart to the "logical" or semantical togetherness of the words "red" and "cube" in the verbal expression of the judgment, "There is a red cube in front of me" (pp. 10–11).

As McDowell spells out on pp. 30–35, when one has a visual *experience* with the content *that there is a red cube there*, the conceptual capacities operative will be capacities associated with the concept RED, the concept CUBE, a location concept, and so on. And those conceptual capacities are operative in experience with a specific mode of togetherness, as they are in judgements with the same content. It is clear that having the conceptual capacity associated with, say, the concept of a cube involves possession of that concept. At one point McDowell seems to identify having the capacity with possessing the concept (p. 34). Presumably, then, McDowell thinks that in experience insofar as conceptual capacities are drawn upon, so are the concepts *one possesses*. McDowell's picture, which he frames in terms of the exercise (in judgement) and actualization (in experience) of conceptual capacities, seems to be a picture on which in experience concepts one possesses are drawn into operation—those concepts which compose the content.

So McDowell's position is a pure conceptualist position. On it, experience has *conceptual content*, but it involves the operation of conceptual capacities, and hence *concept possession*. McDowell's position is thus distinct from the second of the mixed positions we encountered above.

I would conjecture also that for McDowell there is simply no room in his thinking—about the relations between mental occurrences, conceptual content, concept possession, and conceptual capacities—for the second mixed position. The “components” of his conceptualism I have mentioned are, in his thinking, inextricable. (It is misleading to speak of them as components). One gets the impression, in reading McDowell, that *what it is* for an experience, or any mental occurrence, to have a conceptual content, just is for conceptual capacities to be operative in that mental occurrence. There is just no question, for McDowell, that one might be in a mental state with a conceptual content, without possessing the concepts which constitute that content. Being in such a state just is, at least partially, for one to be exercising one's conceptual capacities with respect to some subject matter. (This is just to *describe* McDowell's position as I see it. Whether an alternative understanding of the relations between mental occurrences, conceptual content, concept possession, and conceptual capacities is forthcoming and preferable (e.g., one that might sustain the coherence of the second mixed position) is a further question).

Before continuing, I'd like to add a final remark to the discussion of McDowell on conceptual capacities. For McDowell having conceptual capacities, as we've seen, involves, in effect, being capable of judgement and self-critical thinking. This involves the capacity for a degree of self-consciousness (1994, p. 47, fn. 1). It is not just that one is thus capable of making up one's mind about things (judgement), but one must also be capable of mediating one's own making up of one's mind by reflecting on one's own acts of judging. Moreover, McDowell seems to think that there is a constitutive connection between possessing conceptual capacities and having a language (being capable of linguistic understanding) (see McDowell (1994), Lecture VI, and the Postscript to Lecture VI). These features mean that conceptual capacities can only be possessed by quite sophisticated creatures such as mature human beings. Thus, only such creatures are capable of experience in McDowell's sense. McDowell doesn't deny that non-concept wielding creatures are capable of perceptual sensitivity, even awareness in a certain sense. It is just that they are not capable of the kind of perceptual experience McDowell thinks we enjoy—which essentially involves the cooperation of receptivity and spontaneity.

McDowell's view, then, can't be criticized on the grounds that it denies perception or awareness to animals and young children. But one might be suspicious of the idea that mature human perception *is* a different species of perception to nonhuman animal perception (where in the mature human case perceptual capacities are rational capacities, part of one's reason—see McDowell (2011a,b)). It is one thing to point out that we can understand perception as a genus of which there are rational and non-rational species (to make logical space for this view). It is another thing to show that this is how we should think of things. I take it that McDowell thinks that unless in the mature human case perception is understood as conceptual (and so as part of human rationality), we cannot understand how perception can have the reason giving role it does for us mature humans. (I scrutinize this suggestion in the next Chapter).

We now have some idea of what McDowell's conceptualist position amounts to. And as noted above this is a view McDowell advances

as a way of overcoming the oscillation between coherentism and the Myth of the Given. McDowell wants to do this in a way that satisfies minimal empiricism, and hence secures the possibility of empirical content. This means that his view of experience has to be one on which it can be (a) both a way of being receptive to the world, but also (b) something which has a rational role—something which gives reasons for empirical beliefs. How, more precisely, does thinking of experience as conceptual help McDowell achieve his goal of satisfying minimal empiricism? McDowell says, with reference to cases of experience which are genuine perceivings

This joint involvement of receptivity and spontaneity [the conceptualist view of experience] allows us to say that in experience one can take in how things are. How things are is independent of one's thinking (except, of course, in the special case in which how things are is that one thinks such-and-such). By being taken in in experience, how things are anyway becomes available to exert the required rational control, originating outside one's thinking, on one's exercises of spontaneity (pp. 25–26).

And shortly after

In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is *that things are thus and so*. *That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement: it becomes the content of a judgement if the subject decides to take the experience at face value. So it is conceptual content. But *that things are thus and so* is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are. Thus the idea of conceptually structured operations of receptivity puts us in a position to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality. Experience enables the layout of reality itself to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks (p. 26).

On McDowell's picture the world itself—conceived of as the totality of conceptually structured facts—is what empirical thinking is answer-

able to. How so? Because in genuine cases of perceiving experience discloses facts to us. Those very facts—aspects of the conceptually structured world—can then exert a rational influence on the judgements we make and beliefs we form on the basis of experience. We can properly say, for instance, that so-and-so has an entitlement to believe that the cube before her is red, of a sort adequate for knowledge, because thanks to her experience the *fact that the cube is red* is in plain view. (This would be an instance of McDowell's point for visual perception). Having the fact that the cube is red in plain view, in one's visual consciousness, constitutes one's being in possession of a conclusive reason to believe that the cube is red. For there is *no* possibility compatibly with someone's being in that state that the cube is not red.

Experience can play this role, McDowell thinks, only if it is conceptual in the way he thinks it is. For a fact to be in plain view, or, more generally, for a fact to be available to exert a rational influence in perception, is for it to be the conceptual content of an experience, and this, on McDowell's picture, requires the operation of one's conceptual capacities in experience itself. On McDowell's view experience can be both (a) a mode of receptivity (in experience, in good cases, one takes in the world), and (b) can thus provide conclusive reasons for beliefs. This is enough for minimal empiricism—and so, in McDowell's eyes, empirical content—to be secure.

McDowell presents a striking view about the nature of the world. The world itself has a conceptual structure. The world is the totality of *true conceptual contents*. To be receptive to the world, for McDowell, is thus inextricably bound up with conceptual capacities being operative in one's mode of receptivity (in humans, this is perceptual experience). There is just no option, on McDowell's view, that one can make any sort of contact with the world without actualizations of conceptual capacities. For the world *is* conceptual. On McDowell's view, when all goes well in perception, there is a perfect harmony between the mind and world. The operation of conceptual capacities in the mind enables a conceptually structured aspect of the world to be present to one's consciousness in perception. And only if perception is understood in this way, McDowell thinks, can it have the epistemological status it *must* have—as enabling empirical thinking to be answerable to *the world*—if empirical content is

to be possible. (I will return to the ‘world as conceptual’ aspect of McDowell’s view in the next Chapter).

4.4.4 A McDowellian Reasons Answer

Thus McDowell endorses (2) and (3) of the crucial components of a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation:

- (1) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition.
- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied.
- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

Seeing has a reason giving role. And it is because seeing is constitutively fact involving, and hence conceptual, that it can provide reasons for belief (conclusive reasons even). So McDowell can say: visual perception is a means of knowing because it is of the nature of visual perception (being fact involving) to ensure the satisfaction of some constitutive condition on knowledge—the reasons condition.

In fact, by McDowell’s lights, the reasons condition on knowledge is more specific than the one we have been operating with so far. McDowell writes that

justification adequate to reveal a state as one of knowing must be incompatible with falsehood and can be had.... The right notion for Sellars’s point [that knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons, that is, that knowing that *p* requires having a reason to believe that *p*] is precisely what Brandom says I reject, a notion for which entitlement and truth do not come apart. (2002, p. 98–99)

To put this explicitly in terms of reasons, McDowell thinks that knowing that *p* requires having a *conclusive* reason to believe that *p*. On the understanding of a conclusive reason I am operating with here, following McDowell, to have a conclusive reason to believe that *p* is to have a reason which guarantees the truth of *p*. If one is in possession of a conclusive

reason to believe that p , one thereby has a truth-guaranteeing justification or entitlement to believe that p . (For a different notion of ‘conclusive reason’ see Dretske (1971)).

With this more specific reasons condition McDowell’s view of visual perception allows him to give a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. If one sees, on McDowell’s view, one’s visual experience puts the fact that p in plain view, one is thus in a state which guarantees that p is true. This, for McDowell, constitutes one’s having a conclusive reason to believe that p .

For McDowell having a visual experience in which the fact that p is manifest to one guarantees the truth of p (it is factive). But such states don’t guarantee *knowledge* that p . McDowell takes the following sort of case to show why not (1982, p. 390, fn. 37). Suppose my senses are functioning perfectly, and I have a visual experience in which the fact that a yellow lemon is present is visually manifest to me. But now suppose that I just took a drug and have been convinced, by an authority, that it is a strong hallucinogen, which invokes hallucinations of the presence of yellow lemons. But in fact, unbeknownst to me, it is a sugar pill. Given this, I just don’t take it that there is a yellow lemon present, despite the visual manifestation of the fact that there is a yellow lemon present. Knowledge that p requires one to take it that p , and having an experience in which the fact that p is visually manifest to me, for McDowell, is itself no guarantee that one *takes it* that things are thus and so. This is one reason why such experiences don’t guarantee knowledge.

Later I will discuss in more depth what it is for such experiences to give one reasons, in McDowell’s view (see section (4.6)). But for now I want to explore McDowell’s conception of *seeings*. I will structure the discussion around this issue: the question of explanation, and so a Reasons Answer, concerns visual perception as we ordinarily understand it. For instance, cases in which one sees a red cube. But McDowell makes a lot of the idea that in seeing *facts* are manifest. Can he really be concerned with visual perception in the ordinary sense?

4.5 McDowell on Seeing

McDowell (1994) understands *seeings* as visual experiences in which one ‘takes in how things are’ (p. 25); experience is a matter of ‘openness to the layout of reality’, where that means, openness to how things are, facts; experiences have content of the form *that things are thus and so*, but ‘if the subject of the experience is not misled, that very same thing, *that things are thus and so* is also a perceptible fact, an aspect of the perceptible world’ (p. 26). In experiences which are seeings, McDowell thinks, ‘some case of how things are impresses itself on a perceiving subject’ (1999, p. 9); one has ‘a fact available to one’ (1999, p. 16). McDowell has a fact involving view of seeing.

McDowell sometimes gives expression to seeings understood as such using the terminology of ‘seeing that such-and-such is the case’. For instance, he does just that in the following passage:

in enjoying an experience one is open to manifest facts, facts that obtain anyway and impress themselves on one’s sensibility. (At any rate one seems to be open to facts, and when one is not misled, one is.)... when we see that such-and-such is the case, we, and our seeing, do not stop anywhere short of the fact. What we see is: that such-and-such is the case (1994, p. 29).

So isn’t McDowell focused on seeing that *p*, as opposed to seeing a *thing*? Well, things aren’t quite so straightforward. For as noted above McDowell thinks that an experience in which the fact that *p* is visually manifest, what we can now call a case of seeing that *p*, doesn’t entail knowledge. Such experiences put one in excellent epistemic positions but fall short of knowledge. This means that there is a conflict between how McDowell uses the expression ‘*S* sees that *p*’ and the ordinary meaning of this expression. For on the ordinary language semantics for ‘*S* sees that *p*’, if *S* sees that *p*, then she knows, by visual means, that *p* (see the discussion in Chapter 1 above).

It seems then that McDowell’s use of ‘sees that *p*’ is quasi-technical. That is, it is related to but doesn’t conform to the natural language semantics I outlined above. McDowell’s use is perfectly legitimate and well

suited for his purposes, and there is no *objection* in the fact that it is a quasi-technical use. But it means we have to be careful in understanding what McDowell's view is. When he talks about seeings as cases of seeing that *p* he is not necessarily shifting away from what we would ordinarily regard as visual perception to something like knowledge which is based on vision. And when McDowell insists that seeing that *p* gives one conclusive reason to believe that *p*, we have to remember that he is not talking about seeing that *p* in the ordinary sense. He is, rather, saying something we can construe in this way: seeings, cases of facts being visually manifest to one, or experiences in which facts are directly present to one, give one conclusive reasons.

Even though McDowell's focus is not on seeing that *p* in the ordinary sense, we might still wonder whether in focusing on seeing as *fact involving*, McDowell is giving an account of seeing as we ordinarily understand it. Cases of visual perception as we ordinarily understand it include cases where one sees *a cube*, or sees *the sun setting*, or sees *some snow on the ground*, and so on. As seeings (relations to things) these cases are in a sense *thing involving*, but where do *facts* about the things come into our account of the seeings? Is McDowell giving an account of seeing understood as such? If not then the work of McDowell's we have drawn on here will be irrelevant, since the whole point of drawing on that work is to slot it into a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. And a Reasons Answer is an answer which explains how visual perception, *as we ordinarily understand it*, is a means of knowing (e.g., how seeing a cube, say, can be the means by which one knows that the cube is red).

I think, though, that we can read McDowell's view of seeing as fact involving as a view of *what it is* to see in the ordinary sense. That is, as a view of what it is to see, say, a cube. As far as I can tell, there is no conflict between McDowell's view of seeing and our ordinary understanding of seeing—seeing entities in our perceptible environments. It is just that McDowell has specific metaphysical commitments about the nature of the *experiences* involved in such cases of seeing. In response to Brewer (2006) McDowell (2008b) says

I agree with him that the experience we enjoy in perceiving, as opposed to merely seeming to perceive, 'presents us directly

with the objects in the world around us themselves'. So far from accepting that this is inconsistent with taking perceptual experience to have content...I think the idea of conscious access to objects, of a sort that can enable knowledge about them, positively requires us to conceive of the consciousness in question as contentful. The alternative is a form of the Myth of the Given (p. 200).

So McDowell not only thinks that in seeing we are presented with objects in the world (we *see* such things), but in order to understand such seeing (at least insofar as it can be epistemically significant) we need to invoke a view of experience on which it has conceptual content. One such view is, of course, McDowell's fact involving view which we have been discussing in this Chapter.

So much for assurances. We might still wonder *how* we are to connect up the view of the experiences involved in seeings as fact involving, with the fact that seeing is a matter of being related to things like objects. In the remainder of this section I will try to clarify what McDowell's fact involving view of seeing amounts to. I will then explain how it is a view of (the nature of) seeing in the ordinary sense.

In what sense are seeings visual experiences which are fact involving, for McDowell? It is tempting to suppose that what McDowell is saying is that in visual perception we see facts. Especially in light of the passage quoted above where McDowell says 'What we see is: that such-and-such is the case'. This is how Travis (2007) reads McDowell. On this reading McDowell is saying that facts—true thinkable contents—are among the *objects* of our visual perception (among *what* one can see). For McDowell, on this interpretation, seeing is a matter of clapping one's eyes upon a fact. In the terminology of Chapter 1 above, this would be to view facts as visible in an *object* sense. But we noted above that this seems to be implausible. Facts are not spatial entities, and they do not have looks. They can't be among the *objects* of perception, as we ordinarily understand matters. Indeed, the considerations offered by Travis, which cast doubt on the idea that facts are visible in the object sense, which I made use of above (see section (1.2)), are considerations Travis directs at McDowell by way of criticism.

However, despite the temptation there is to read McDowell in the way that Travis does, he explicitly denies that that is how he should be read. In a reply to Travis McDowell says

If someone sees that there is a red cube in front of her, that there is a red cube in front of her is, as I understand things, a direct articulation of (some of) the *content* of her visual experience, not, as in the conception Travis foists on me, an *object* of her experiential awareness. That there is a red cube in front of her is not something she sees in *anything like* the sense in which she sees the red cube (2008c, p. 265).

In the terminology of Chapter 1, McDowell regards facts as visible in the representational sense. It is relatively uncontroversial that facts are visible in this sense. But McDowell's more specific, and more controversial suggestion, is that seeings are fact involving in that their *representational contents* are facts (true thinkable contents). If I have such an experience and I see that there is a red cube there (in McDowell's sense), then my experience is fact involving in that it represents things to me in virtue of having a fact as its content. (Incidentally, this wouldn't satisfy Travis (2004) who denies that experience is representational). And, as per above, it is of the nature of seeing that there is a red cube there that it has the fact that there is a red cube there as its content.

A consequence of McDowell's view is that the content of a seeing (or at least some of its content) can't be understood as something which is common to such experiences and subjectively matching hallucinatory experiences. So suppose that my brain is manipulated so as I have a visual experience as of a red cube placed before me. And suppose that it is not possible for me to tell, by reflection on my experiential situation, that I am not enjoying a veridical experience with the content: *that there is a red cube before me*. From the "inside" it is, epistemically, just as if I am seeing that there is a red cube there (in McDowell's sense). But suppose there is no red cube there, this is a mere hallucination. If that hallucinatory experience has content, then whatever its content might be, it is obviously not the *fact* that there is a red cube there.

Insofar it is of the nature of seeings that they are fact involving, they have a nature which is quite different to subjectively matching hallucina-

tions. This is consistent, of course with all sorts of commonalities. An experience in which the fact that there is a red cube there is manifest to me, and a subjectively matching hallucination, are each cases of, for instance, its *appearing to me as if* there is a red cube there, or its *seeming to me as if* this is so. It's just that, as McDowell (1986) says

its seeming to one that things are thus and so...can be taken disjunctively, as constituted either by the fact that things are manifestly thus and so or by the fact that that merely seems to be the case (p. 242).

This is McDowell's so-called 'disjunctive' conception of perceptual appearances (see also McDowell (1982, 2008d)).

McDowell's view is one sort of view on which experiences have representational contents. Such views—representational views—can be views of seeing in the ordinary sense. Take, for example, a red cube. What is it to *see* a red cube? A representational theorist can give an account along these lines. Seeing a red cube is in part a matter of having a visual experience of the cube. (This is a theory neutral point, which is involved in our ordinary conception of visual perception, as I argued in Chapter 1). The visual experience one has in seeing the cube must have a representational content which concerns the cube, a content which is in some sense about the cube. (And with this the theory enters the picture). Such representational content represents the cube as being some way(s) to the subject of the experience. Suppose, for instance, that perceptual representational content is propositional content of some kind. So in a given case in which one sees the cube, on this view, one might have an experience with the content *that there is a red cube there*; or *that that [the cube] is red*; or *that that is thus [some perceptually given way of being e.g., red]*. Those contents can determine ways the experience represents things as being to the subject of the experience—they do so if they are contents of the experience. Which content (or contents) the experience has can't be read off from the fact that it is a seeing of a cube. It will depend upon all sorts of things, such as the environmental conditions in which the cube is seen, the perceptual sensitivities of the perceiver, the conditions of the cube, and so on. But any given instance of *seeing* the cube, will, on this

view, involve representing the cube as being some way just insofar as it is experiential.

To say this much is not to give anything like a complete account of the metaphysics of thing seeing. It is just an element, or starting point, in one sort of account. One might add to the above in a number of ways to get closer to a complete account. For instance, one might make more specific commitments about the nature of the representing and representational content involved in experience (e.g., which theory of propositional content is to be invoked? Are such experiences state and/or content conceptual or nonconceptual? Which properties can be represented in perceptual content? And so on). But also, there are various dimensions to our ordinary conception of seeing which we might want to capture theoretically, by adding to the representational content dimension of the account already invoked.

For instance, in seeing we have experiences in which things look or appear or seem some ways to us. Our experiences have conscious characters. Suppose, simplifying greatly, that in seeing a cube, a faithful and exhaustive description of the character of my experience could be given by saying: it looks to me as if there is a red cube there. One might add to our theory the claim that the character of my experience is *wholly* constituted by the way the experience represents the relevant objects of awareness as being—the experience’s representational content. (So one ends up with a pure form of intentionalism). On this view, all there is to my experience having this character is that in seeing the cube the visual experience I have represents the cube as being present, cubic in shape, and red in colour—or some determinate shade of red. A weaker proposal is that only *some* aspects of the character of my experience are determined by the experience’s representational content. Peacocke (1983) for instance thinks that not every aspect of the subjective character of experiences is determined by representational content (though some aspects are). To account for those aspects associated with, say, colour experience, Peacocke thinks we need to invoke so-called ‘sensational qualities’. (For helpful discussion of different forms of intentionalism see Crane (2009)).

Another aspect of our ordinary conception of seeing is that it is relational—on this all sides can agree. To see *x* is to stand in a certain sort of relation to *x*. Now just saying that seeing involves experience understood

representationally itself does nothing to capture this dimension of our ordinary conception of seeing. Consider again, seeing the cube. One might try to capture the fact that in seeing the cube I must be related to it by suggesting that the content of experience, which we have already agreed is in some sense about the cube, must involve an element which *refers* to the cube. Thus, on this more specific way of understanding the representational content of the experiences involved in seeing, such experiences involve *successful perceptual reference* to what is seen. (This is consistent with the idea that exactly the same type of content can be involved in a subjectively matching hallucination, in which the relevant object doesn't exist. It is just that in that case the referential element of the content will fail to refer.)

The point of this discussion is to highlight how there can be representational views, at the level of what we might call the 'metaphysics of perception', of seeing—that is, seeing as we ordinarily understand it. To be clear, the idea is certainly not that our ordinary understanding of seeing involves a commitment to these ideas. That is very unlikely. It is rather that a commitment to these ideas, is something we theorists might want to have in order to give a philosophical account of what seeing is. Representational approaches in the philosophy of perception are, or can be, in the business of accounting for seeing as we ordinarily understand it. Looked at generally, then, there is no reason to suppose that McDowell's specific representational approach can't be taken in that way. (Of course, it is a separate question altogether whether these views would be *any good* as views of seeing. The issue here is just what these views can be intelligibly thought to *purport* to account for).

But what about the specifics? There are more specific aspects to McDowell's overall view which are designed to account for how in seeing (that is, seeing that such-and-such is the case in McDowell's sense) we see *objects* (that is, things, visible entities). Consider the visual experience I have when I see a red cube before me. Suppose that the content of my experience is the fact that *that red cube is there*. One aspect of such propositionally structured content pertains to what I have expressed with 'that red cube'. Suppose we abstract away from the attributive aspect of the content of the experience which assigns a location to the cube (the *is there* aspect), what aspect of content are we left with in the *that red cube* aspect?

We are left with what we might call the *intuitional aspect* of the content, in light of what McDowell refers to as a ‘standard Kantian characterization of intuitions’ where intuitions are ‘immediate sensible representations of objects’ (1998, p. 32). That is, the *that red cube* aspect of the representational content *that red cube is there* is an aspect which constitutes an immediate sensible representation of an object (a cube). (McDowell sometimes refers to this as the *intuitional content* of experience).

Experiences which are seeings, for McDowell (at least if their content is like: *that red cube is there*), have an intuitional aspect to their fact involving content. Given that this is so, they can intelligibly be thought of as seeings of *objects*—cases in which objects come into view and are present to visual consciousness. But what, more exactly, is intuitional content? McDowell says that

intuitions in the dominant Kantian sense are representations of *thises* (or *thats*); more fully, of *this-suches* (or *that-suches*), which makes it unavoidably clear that even though they are immediately of objects, such representations already involve the understanding (p. 32).

Sensible intuitions are representations, they thus have representational content. If a propositional content (a judgement-shaped content) has an intuitional aspect to it, then this intuitional aspect is a form of representational content (it is not itself judgement-shaped though). In the passage above, there are three things we need to unpack: (1) Intuitions are representations of *thises* (or, as we can also say, intuitional content, or the intuitional aspect of an experience’s propositional content represents *thises*); (2) Intuitions represent *thises* as *this-suches* (or, as we can also say, intuitional content has both a *this* dimension and a *such* dimension); and (3) Because there is a *such* dimension to intuitional content, intuitions (the intuitional aspect of propositional content) already involves the understanding.

Regarding (1), since intuitional content has a *this* dimension it represents objects or things (an intuition represents *this*, or *that* object). But, and this is (2), sensible intuitions don’t, and I take it can’t, represent things (have a *this* dimension) without representing them as *this suches*

(without having a *such* dimension). But what does this mean? The *such* dimension of intuitional content pertains to the features of the object that are visible from the perceiver's point of view, the object which is represented in the *this* dimension. So in a sensible intuition a *this* gets represented as a *this such*, e.g., *this cube* (or *that cube*, or *that red cube*). Why must sensible intuitions involve a *such* dimension? As McDowell says elsewhere in a 'visual intuition, an object is visually present to a subject with those of its features that are visible to the subject from her vantage point. It is through the presence of those features that the object is present. How else could an object visually present to one?' (2008, p. 8). It is difficult to conceive of what it would be for an object to be represented to one in a sensible intuition without being represented as propertied in some ways (ways which pertain to some of its visible features). It is not as if the object could be represented to one as a bare particular. Thus the idea that insofar as objects are represented in sensible intuitions they are represented as *this suches* seems plausible.

But what about (3), the idea that the *such* dimension to intuitional content implicates the understanding? What does this amount to? The involvement of the understanding, for McDowell, means the involvement of concepts and conceptual content. McDowell says

Here the fact that, say, "cube" figures in a specification of the content of an intuition—the intuition represents its object as that red *cube*—reflects the fact that for one to be the subject of such an intuition is in part for there to be actualized in one's sensory consciousness the very same *conceptual* capacity—possession of the concept of a cube—whose exercise would partly determine the predicate element in the content of a judgement whose content we could specify, with that imagined occupancy of the subject's viewpoint, in the form "That is a red cube" (1998, pp. 33–34).

So when we take that full propositional content—*that red cube is there*—and abstract away from the attributive aspect of the content which assigns a location to the cube (the *is there* aspect)—which is, for McDowell, also a conceptual aspect—we are not left with some non- or pre-conceptual aspect of content. We are left with intuitional content, which is a form

of conceptual content which doesn't have the structure of propositional content.

McDowell exploits this conception of the intuitional aspect to propositional content in the following way: 'A seeing that ...[that is, a seeing that *p* in McDowell's sense] is a seeing *of an object*, at least if its content is of the sort that figures in the example I have been working with [e.g., where the content of the seeing that...is: *that red cube is there*]' (p. 33). I take it that we can construe what McDowell is saying here as follows. When one sees a cube, one has a fact involving visual experience. (One 'sees that...' in McDowell's sense). Suppose that the content of this experience is: *that red cube is there*. Now this is fully propositional content (it is judgement-shaped). But it has an intuitional aspect in its *that red cube* part. Thus a seeing which is an experience with such a fact involving content can intelligibly be thought of as a *seeing of an object* (a cube), for in virtue of its intuitional content, it counts as a sensible (visual) intuition of an object—an intuition in which an object is immediately present to one, represented as a *that such (that red cube)*.

So it seems that despite having a fact involving conception of seeings, for McDowell seeings can still be seeings *of objects* (things). Moreover, McDowell's account can capture some of the crucial aspects of seeing as we ordinarily understand it; the fact it is a mode of conscious awareness, and the fact that it is relational (on these features see Chapter 1). I'll elaborate on this now.

First, the conscious aspect of seeing. McDowell thinks that in seeing facts are present to one in *visual consciousness*, and the operations of conceptual capacities which make that possible for one are actualized *in sensory consciousness* (this was mentioned briefly above). McDowell says

conceptual episodes of the relevant kind [visual experiences in which facts are manifest to one] are already, as the conceptual episodes they are, cases of *being under the visual impression* that such-and-such is the case. It is not that as conceptual episodes they are phenomenologically colourless, so that they would need to be associated with visual sensations in order that some complex composed of these conceptual episodes and the associated visual sensations can be recognizably vi-

sual. These conceptual episodes are already, as the conceptual episodes they are, shapings of visual consciousness (1998d, p. 14).

Suppose in seeing a cube I have a visual experience in which the fact that *that red cube is there* is visually manifest to me. This visual experience is a ‘conceptual episode’ on McDowell’s view. Part of what is involved in its being the conceptual episode it is is the *conceptual content* it has (the fact visually manifest), and this conceptual content has an intuitional aspect. So we might take the idea that a visual experience shapes visual consciousness *as the conceptual episode it is* as implying that in seeing, visual consciousness is shaped in part by some of the conceptual (including intuitional) content of the experience one has in seeing. So when I see the cube, and the fact which constitutes the content of my experience is: *that red cube is there*, part of what shapes (that is to say, constitutively determines) the conscious character of my experience is the *fact* that the red cube is there, and the *this-such* content that that involves. When I *see* the red cube, and my seeing involves the content that *that red cube is there*, as opposed to when I have a subjectively matching hallucination, the conscious character of my experience—that it seems or looks or appears to me as if there is a red cube there—is determined by the fact that there is a red cube there.

Does this view help us to appreciate how in seeing an object we stand in a relation to that object? Or would we have to add that on as an extra condition? Given how McDowell understands intuitions—and so the intuitional aspect of propositional content—the relationality of seeing is already in place thanks to the intuitional aspect of the content of the experience involved in seeing. McDowell says

we debar ourselves from this notion of immediate presentness of objects to subjects if we let it seem that a seen object would have to figure in the content of a conceptual occurrence that is a seeing of it as, for instance, occupying a position at the outer end of the a causal chain that generates the subject’s current experiential situation in some suitably designated way (p. 48) [...] [T]he picture depicts intuitions as, *qua* conceptual occurrences of a certain kind, *relation* to objects... The idea is that

for a conceptual episode to possess intuitional content just is for it to stand in a certain relation to an object; so if there is no object suitably related to a conceptual episode, then there is no such relation, and accordingly no such content (p. 50).

This also helps us to see how on McDowell's fact involving view of seeing, he is not equating seeing (in his sense: seeing that *p*) with veridical experience (experiencing that *p* when *p* is true). McDowell thinks that we shouldn't equate these since a veridical visual experience is not necessarily a seeing. He brings this out with the following example

Consider a case in which someone is screened off from a red cube by a successful *trompe l'oeil* painting in which an indistinguishable red cube is depicted as being precisely where the unseen red cube actually is. Here we have a veridical ostensible seeing [that is, a veridical visual experience] that is not a seeing (1998d, p. 47).

McDowell is suggesting that one can have a visual experience with the content: there is a red cube there, which is not a seeing, even though it is veridical. In McDowell's example one gets to have an experience with that content, an experience which represents things in that way, by confronting an incredibly realistic painting. The experience gets to be veridical because the content of the experience is (as it happens) true. But, intuitively, this isn't a seeing. Why? Because it doesn't involve the *presence*, in intuition, of its subject matter (the red cube). McDowell (2011b) says that we need to make room for the

idea of an experience in which some aspect of objective reality is *there* for a subject, perceptually *present* to her. That is a more demanding condition than an experience's being merely veridical (p. 245).

By having intuitional content, an experience (fact involving as it is) can meet this more demanding condition, and thus count as a *seeing* of an object.

Now since features of objective reality are *present* in fact involving experiences (seeings), thanks to the experience's intuitional aspects, I think

it is fair to conjecture that for McDowell the fact that the representational contents of those experiences is responsible for their conscious characters is not to be *contrasted* with the idea that objective features of reality (entities, and their visible qualities) can themselves be partly responsible for their conscious characters. On McDowell's account of fact involving experiences, there is room for objective features of reality themselves to be involved in determining the conscious character of experience (when we have a case of seeing). When I see the red cube, insofar as its looking to me as if there is a red cube there is determined by the way my experience represents the world to me, the *content* of my experience, it is not at the *expense* of *objects* of experience and their features.

As a final word on how McDowell's fact involving view of seeing can intelligibly count as an account of seeing in the ordinary sense I want to mention illusions briefly. Suppose I see a red cube. But in seeing the cube a faithful description of the character of my experience would be one in which I say: I seem to see a green cube at that location. (Perhaps, for instance, there is a funny trick of the light which makes the cube look exactly like a typical looking green cube). Intuitively we would classify this experience as a colour illusion. How can we account for this experience in terms of McDowell's fact involving view?

One response to this question is that we don't have to. For the *fact involving* view only applies to "Good cases". And this is a case in which one is misled. Thus we can group it with subjectively matching hallucinations, which the fact involving view doesn't apply to. The thing to say about this case, on this response, is that it is an experience in which it *merely* seems as if there is a green cube there. But this response doesn't help us to understand how this experience is still, intuitively, a *seeing* (an issue we don't have with the hallucinatory cases). Despite being an illusory experience we are not inclined to give up on the idea that I genuinely *see* the cube. I do see it, just not for the *red* cube it is. There is thus more to this experience than it *merely* seeming to be as if there is a green cube there.

But this doesn't spell trouble for McDowell's view. For this can still be a case in which there is a visual intuition of the cube, and, moreover, on which there *are* facts involved, as content, in the experience, which have an intuitional aspect. The facts can't include the fact that there is

a *green* cube there, but that is not to say that there are no facts suitable to enter into the content of the experience which determine that the experience has intuitional content and hence which sustain the idea that this is a case of *seeing*. So, for instance, let's suppose I accurately locate the cube. So insofar as my experience represents the cube as being *there* (at some precise location relative to me), it is a veridical experience. We can capture this in the McDowellian framework, with the idea that my experience, my seeing of the cube, involves, among its contents, the fact that: *that cube is there*. This has an intuitional aspect ('*that cube*'), which allows us to say that the thing in question (*that*) is immediately present to me through a *such* dimension of some of its content (*cube*). It is also *seemingly* present as a *green* cube, but that is a mere seeming. (But what if we add that the experience is illusory with respect to location too, and then with respect to any other property we might care to mention? Then I think we lose our grip on the idea that we still have a case of *seeing an object*, as opposed to a mere wash of seemingly present properties in a hallucination that has some causal connection to an actual object).

The view of perception I've outlined is what above I called McDowell's *early* view of perception. We are now in a position to note briefly what his *later* view of perception is. A core change in his later view of perception, which comes in "Avoiding the Myth of the Given", is that seeing (e.g., seeing a cube) can be understood without appeal to judgement-shaped content. Thus McDowell gives up on the fact involving aspect of his view. But this isn't the radical departure it might seem to be. Since seeing is still understood in terms of representational content, and even conceptual content (in McDowell's pure conceptualist way). How so? McDowell has *intuitional content* do all of the work. It is not that in seeing there is intuitional content as an aspect of fuller judgement-shaped content, but rather intuitional content can be the complete content of an experience: 'Having something in view, say, a red cube, can be complete in itself' (2008a, p. 11).

To return to our main focus, I've been trying to argue that McDowell's early view of seeing is an account of seeing as we ordinarily understand seeing. It is an account of what it is to see entities in our

perceptible surroundings in terms of judgement-shaped content (facts) with intuitional aspects. The account has the resources to illuminate certain aspects of our ordinary conception of visual perception—the fact that seeing is a mode of conscious awareness and so involves conscious character, and the fact that seeing is a relation to a perceptible entity. These aspects are accounted for, by McDowell, in terms of experiences being understood in terms of judgement-shaped contents with intuitional aspects.

The upshot of this is that McDowell's account of seeing *is* well suited to slot into a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. The question of explanation demands an explanation of visual perception's epistemic significance—of what makes it the case that visual perception is a means of knowing. A *McDowellian* Reasons Answer says: because seeing an entity x is conceptual, a sort of experience which involves facts, and intuitional content, it ensures that one has conclusive reasons in one's possession.

We now need to ask if a McDowellian Reasons Answer is any good? If not, is some sort of Reasons Answer still salvageable? I will first discuss the reasons condition as it figures in McDowell's account of visually based knowledge.

4.6 Reasons, Reasoning and Visual Knowledge

McDowell endorses a reasons condition, and this is a crucial dimension to a McDowellian Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. A commitment to the reasons condition is part of what sustains the idea that knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons. In this section I want to consider a cluster of questions which arise for this epistemological perspective as it applies specific to visually based knowledge. In considering this cluster of questions my aims are to clarify what McDowell's commitments are, and so clarify the content of the McDowellian Reasons Answer; but also I want to show how this strand of McDowell's thinking is defensible in some respects. The questions I'll address, concerning McDowell's view, are the following questions:

- (a) Does McDowell's Sellarsian conception of visually based knowledge as a standing in the space of reasons require such knowledge to involve reasoning?
- (b) What's involved in having reasons for visually based knowledge?
- (c) What are reasons for visually based beliefs?
- (d) Is it correct to think that seeing gives one *conclusive* reasons?

I'll address (a)–(c) in the next section, and (d) in the subsequent section.

4.6.1 Seeing, Reasons and Reasoning

As we've seen, for McDowell one must possess a conclusive reason to believe that p if one is to know that p . But we can add that for McDowell if one's reason is to be knowledge grounding, one must be rationally responsive to it, in some sense, in believing that p . For McDowell, *mere* possession of a conclusive reason to believe that p won't make one's belief knowledgeable. We can capture this by saying that for McDowell the reasons condition comes in an expanded form: for S to know that p S must have a conclusive reason to believe that p which she is rationally responsive to in believing that p . (To put things differently: if one's believing that p is to count as knowledge, thanks in part to the conclusive reason one has to believe that p , then that conclusive reason must be *one's reason for believing* that p ; or, *the reason for which* one believes that p). The crucial question is what is it for one to be rationally responsive to one's conclusive reason to believe that p , in believing that p ?

One answer is that being rationally responsive to a reason requires engaging in a bit of reasoning which involves that reason as a premise (or which somehow involves the active and self-conscious exploitation of that reason). Burge (2003) thinks that McDowell's commitment to what I'm calling the expanded reasons condition, as applied to perceptual knowledge (and so visually based knowledge), involves a commitment to the idea that perceptual knowledge requires reasoning. He uses this as the basis for a criticism of McDowell's view:

The other view [McDowell's view] holds that perceptions are reasons and implies that the formation of perceptual belief is

a piece of reasoning—a transition from a reason to what it is a reason for. This view maintains an empirically unsupported and implausible view about the form of perception (as propositional), and its treatment of the transition between perception and belief as a form of reasoning or reason transmission has little basis in intuitive epistemic practice (p. 527).

I see a yellow lemon, and thereby know (and so believe) that the lemon is yellow. One of Burge's criticisms here is that we don't intuitively regard the transition from visual perception to belief in this kind of case as a piece of reasoning, or as involving reasoning. If we add that the belief counts as *knowledge* that doesn't make a difference. We don't thereby think that there must have been some reasoning in the transition.

I think we can agree with Burge that it is counterintuitive to think that the perception-belief transition, in such cases, involves reasoning—at least on certain conceptions of what such reasoning would have to be. If, for instance, such reasoning were to be a matter of moving, inferentially, from one belief to another, with the content of the former belief counting as one's reason for the belief one arrives at, then this seems to be at odds with how we ordinarily think of perception-belief transitions in the cases we are interested in (e.g., cases like the lemon case).

For instance, one such view might endorse the following story about how my perceptual belief that there is a yellow lemon present gets to be warranted on the basis of my perception: I start out with a belief to the effect that I see a yellow lemon there. I believe that seeing a yellow lemon there means that there is a yellow lemon present. So, I infer (and believe), on this basis, that there is a yellow lemon present.

But we just don't think that perceptual belief, in the cases such as the lemon case, involves anything like such reasoning at the psychological level. Nor do we think that a perceptual belief could not be a belief that one is epistemically *entitled to*, and *warranted in holding*, unless one has gone through such reasoning. Thinking that perceptually based knowledge requires reasoning understood in this way falsifies the manifest image we have of the link between perception and perceptual belief at both the psychological and epistemological level. So if McDowell's view of visually

based knowledge as requiring an (expanded) reasons condition means that he is committed to this sort of reasoning view then it must be rejected. Burge recommends the rejection of McDowell's view partly on the basis of the idea that it involves an implausible commitment to some such sort of reasoning view.

It is undeniable that such reasoning is an excellent way of manifesting a capacity one has for responsiveness to reasons (as the reasons they are). As McDowell says:

The primary context for the idea of responsiveness to reasons as such is *reasoning*: an activity in which someone explicitly considers what to believe or what to do, and takes reasons into account in determining her belief or her action' (2006a, p. 130).

But is reasoning the only way in which one can be responsive to reasons as such? McDowell doesn't think so. He says 'cases in which one engages in reasoning do not exhaust the scope of one's responsiveness to reasons as such' (p. 130). And so McDowell rejects the idea that perceptual knowledge, in involving such responsiveness to reasons, requires reasoning.

The question still stands, though, how can we understand the way in which perceptual knowledge does involve responsiveness to reasons as such if not along the lines of the reasoning model? We might work this out with reference to a case McDowell gives regarding responsiveness to reasons in action which doesn't require reasoning:

Consider someone following a marked trail, who at the crossing of paths goes to the right in response to a signpost pointing that way. It would be absurd to say that for going to the right to be a rational response to the signpost, it must issue from the subject's making an explicit determination that the way the signpost points gives her a reason for going to the right. What matters is just that she acts as she does because (this is a reason-introducing "because") the signpost points to the right. (This explanation competes with, for instance, supposing she goes to the right at random, without noticing the signpost, or noticing it but not understanding it.) What

shows that she goes to the right in rational response to the way the signpost points might be just that she can afterwards answer the question why she went to the right—a request for her reason for doing that—by saying “There was a signpost pointing to the right”. She need not have adverted to that reason and decided on that basis to go right (2006a, p. 129).

Similarly, when we say of a rationally endowed creature that she believes that there is a yellow lemon in the vicinity because she can see a yellow lemon, the ‘because’ here is a reason-introducing because. That is to say, she believes that there is a yellow lemon before her in light of the reasons available to her consciousness (namely, that she can see the lemon). But believing in the light of such a reason is not inferential. She believes, simply, because she sees; *not* because she believes she sees and infers something from that. Her believing that there is a yellow lemon present is a rational response to her seeing and this is manifest in the fact that she can say “I can see that there is a yellow lemon present” in response to a request for her reason for believing that there is a yellow lemon present. And of course ‘one believes what one says when one cites a perceptual state in offering a justification, but it would be a confusion to infer that the warrant one claims to have is constituted by the belief as opposed to the perceptual state’ (2011a, p. 34).

McDowell thinks that for these ‘because’ explanations to be genuine manifestations of rational responsiveness to reasons as such, experience—which is what one reports on, and offers as one’s reason, in such explanations—must be conceptual. It must itself be an actualization of one’s capacity for rationality, and it is precisely that, on McDowell’s view, because it involves the actualization of conceptual capacities.

For McDowell, offering a rational explanation for one’s knowledgeable perceptual belief (in terms of citing one’s perceptual state) is one way to *manifest* the fact that one’s perceptual belief is a rational response to the reasons one’s perceptual state constitutes. He doesn’t think that offering (or even thinking through) such an explanation is *required* for one’s believing to be rational. (This would be just as problematic as the sort of reasoning view mentioned above). He does think, though, that *being able to offer* such a rational explanation is a requirement on one’s per-

ceptual belief counting as knowledge (and so, on one's belief having been formed in a rational way). This links up to an aspect of the Sellarsian conception of knowledge which we haven't yet considered. Sellars (1956) says

...in characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*....
we are placing it in the logical space of reasons; of *justifying*
and being able to justify what one says. (§36, p. 248).

The bit I have highlighted at the end is what we have yet to consider. McDowell holds that if one knows that *p* one must be able to offer a rational explanation of one's belief that *p* (and in that sense be able to justify one's belief). In the case we have been considering, such a explanation might be as straightforward as: "I believe that there is a yellow lemon there because I see one". For cases such as the one we are considering, then, the requirement is *not* that one must be able construct an *argument* with 'I see the lemon' as a premise (or with 'I seem to see a lemon' as a premise), which, with additional premises, get one to the conclusion: 'there is a yellow lemon there'. One may be able to engage in such reasoning, and it might be that the capacity to engage in such reasoning is required to count as being rational. But relative to what is required by way of being able to justify a belief that there is a yellow lemon there, the more simple: "I can see it" is all one needs to be able to offer. (So, to meet the requirement in cases of perceptual knowledge doesn't require much sophistication, for instance, it doesn't require one to have a *sophisticated* idea of what one is doing in citing one's perceptual state as a reason, which one might have by employing the sorts of concepts that epistemologists employ in *theorizing* about reasons and justification).

That McDowell holds to this being-able-to-justify requirement, for perceptual knowledge, comes out in his reply to Brandom (1995):

Brandom writes (904): "A fundamental point on which broadly externalist approaches to epistemology are clearly right is that one can *be* justified without being *able* to justify. That is, one can have the standing of being *entitled* to a commitment without having to *inherit* that entitlement from *other* commitments inferentially related to it as reasons." If

one's justification for "There's a candle in front of me" is that one sees that there is a candle in front of one (that the presence of a candle in front of one makes itself visually apparent to one), one's entitlement is... not inherited from a commitment to "I see that there's a candle in front of me." [This is the point we have just been considering about how for McDowell perceptual knowledge is not inferential.] But that is not to say in other words—Brandom's "That is"—that one can be justified without being able to justify... The case is one in which one is able to justify, to vindicate one's entitlement, precisely by saying "I see that there's a candle in front of me." (2002, p. 100)

The being-able-to-justify commitment of McDowell's means that he is committed to a form of epistemological internalism. McDowell is clear about this in the following passage:

The conception of knowledge Sellars expresses [and which McDowell endorses] in the remark I began with [that is, the remark about knowledge being a standing in the space of reasons] is epistemologically *internalist*, in this sense: the warrant [i.e., reasons] by virtue of which of which a belief counts as knowledgeable is accessible to the knower; it is at least potentially known by her. Someone who has a bit of knowledge of the relevant sort is self-conscious about the credentials of her knowledge. As Sellars puts it, she occupies a position in the space of being able to justify what one says (2011a, p. 17).

When one knows that p on the basis of visual perception, the justificational basis of one's knowledge must be accessible to one. That is, the conclusive reasons which constitute one's warrant or entitlement to believe as one does must be accessible to one. Such reasons must be accessible to one in such a way that one could exploit those reasons in justifying one's beliefs. (Which, as noted above, need not be a matter of being able to construct an elaborate inference, but just being able to offer a rational explanation of one's perceptual belief by citing one's perceptual state).

This, I take it, is worth calling 'internalist', in line with how that expression is typically used in this context, if we add that such reasons must

be *reflectively* accessible to one (that is, potentially known by one through *a priori* reflection). And I take it that this is what McDowell intends, for as he says elsewhere ‘we lose the point of the space of reasons if we allow someone to possess a justification even if it is outside his reflective reach’ (1993, p. 418, fn. 7). So McDowell endorses an across the board form of access internalism, he thus endorses an access internalist account of visually based knowledge.

McDowell also counts as an internalist, about visually based knowledge, on another notion of internalism which we find in the epistemological literature. (For a helpful discussion of the different forms of internalism and externalism in epistemology see Pryor (2001)). On this notion

internalism is the view that a person’s beliefs are justified only by things that are internal to the person’s mental life. We shall call this version of internalism “mentalism”. A mentalist theory may assert that justification is determined entirely by occurrent mental factors or by dispositional ones as well. As long as the things that are said to contribute to the justification are in the person’s mind, the view qualifies as a version of mentalism (Feldman and Conee (2001), p. 2).

McDowell counts as an internalist in the ‘mentalistic’ sense since for him the reasons we have which help constitute visually based knowledge are confined to our mental states. They are states of *seeing*.

McDowellian mentalism, as we might call it, is, admittedly, slightly different to the sort of mentalism we often find in the epistemological literature. For often mentalism is combined with the following claim ‘S’s epistemic justification for believing that *p* is constituted solely by properties that *S* has in common with her recently envatted physical duplicate’ (Neta and Pritchard (2007), p. 382). But McDowell doesn’t accept this additional claim. The mental states which justify on McDowell’s picture are factive mental states (states of seeing), and these aren’t shared with envatted physical duplicates. Suppose I see a lemon, and we understand my experience in terms of McDowell’s fact involving view of seeing; suppose for instance it involves the visual manifestation of the fact that there is a yellow lemon present. The property I have of having that type of experience is not shared by my recently envatted duplicate.

It might *seem* to a brain in a vat as if there is yellow lemon present. But the brain in a vat is in a vat world, there are no lemons. So it can't have an experience in which the fact that there is a yellow lemon present is manifest to it.

Now is the time to discuss in more detail what reasons *are* on McDowell's picture of the reasons we have for visually based beliefs. (For helpful discussion on the ontology of reasons, see Stampe (1987), Raz (1990), Scanlon (1998), Dancy (2000), Pryor (2007) and Turri (2009)).

What I have said in elaborating McDowell's position implies that he thinks that the conclusive reasons we have for our visual perceptual beliefs are mental states: states of seeing (fact involving visual experiences). If I am in a mental state in which the fact that *p* is visually manifest to me, that mental state can count as a reason for believing that *p*. For it *guarantees* that *p* is true. To put it in a McDowellian way: there is no possibility, compatibly with someone's being in such a factive state, that things are not as the state warrants one in believing (2011a, p. 31). Take a visual experience in which the fact that there is a yellow lemon present is visually manifest. There is no possibility, compatibly with me undergoing such an experience, that things are not as the state warrants me in believing, that is, that it is not the case that there is a yellow lemon present.

McDowell, I take it, is committed to what we might call a "mental state conception" of reasons for visually based beliefs. This should give us pause for thought. Since some have interpreted McDowell as offering a quite different understanding of the reasons we have for our perceptual beliefs (see, e.g., Dancy (2006) and Roessler (2009)). From the aspects of McDowell's view of perception we highlighted above, it is tempting to suppose that McDowell is conceiving of *non-mental* facts as reasons. He says '*how things are anyway* becomes available to exert the required rational control'. And 'Experience enables *the layout of reality itself* to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks' (emphases added). Consider also something that McDowell says in his response to Wright (1996)

The point of the idea of experience is that it is in experience that facts themselves come to be among the justifiers available to subjects... (1998c, p. 430)

And the context of this passage makes it clear that here McDowell is focusing on the facts which are the *contents* of experiences. But what else could it be for a non-mental fact to be among the ‘justifiers’ available to a subject if it is not for it to be among the *reasons* available to a subject?

Thus on the face of it McDowell endorses a “non-mental fact conception” of (knowledge grounding) reasons for perceptual beliefs. However, McDowell explicitly denies that this is how he thinks of reasons for belief, and explicitly affirms that he thinks of reasons as mental states. (Though as we’ll see, he doesn’t clearly distinguish this from the idea that they are mental *facts*).

In a response to a paper by Dancy (2006) McDowell (2006b) considers the view that ‘when one forms a belief on the basis of the kind of experience that constitutes being perceptually open to a fact, it is the fact itself that is one’s reason for believing what one does’ (p. 134). As McDowell goes on to say

Dancy attributes just that claim to me, including a denial that one’s reason is – what would be a different fact – that one experiences the fact that makes one’s belief true. But this is simply wrong. When I believe, on the basis of my visual experience, that there is a hummingbird at the feeder, my reason for believing that is precisely that I see it to be so – that I experience, visually, its being so – or at least seem to (p. 134).

Thus McDowell explicitly denies the “non-mental fact conception” of reasons for belief. He seems here to endorse, though, a “mental fact conception” as opposed to a “mental state conception”. Consider also

Note that on this picture [McDowell’s view of perceptual knowledge] it is a perceptual state itself that warrants one in a belief that counts as knowledgeable by virtue of having such warrant... When one knows something to be so by virtue of seeing it to be so, one’s warrant for believing it to be so is that one sees it to be so—not one’s believing that one sees it to be so, which would raise the question what warrants one in *that* belief... (2011a, p. 33)

So far, if we take McDowell's talk of 'warrants' here to capture what he might also put when he writes elsewhere in terms of 'reasons', McDowell is here just affirming the "mental fact conception" of reasons ('one's warrant [reason] for believing it to be so is that one sees it to be so'). But McDowell continues as follows

When an exercise of a rational perceptual capacity puts a subject in a perceptual state that is her seeing it to be so, the perceptual state that is her seeing it to be so comes within the scope of her self-consciousness, so the warrant it provides, as the perceptual state it is, is a justification in Burge's sense [that is, something for which a form of epistemic internalism is true]: warrant that is accessible to the warranted individual...what warrants the subject in her belief about the environment is the perceptual state, not...a belief about the perceptual state. Of course one believes what one says when one cites a perceptual state in offering a justification, but it would be a confusion to infer that the warrant one claims to have is constituted by the belief as opposed to perceptual state (pp. 33-34).

In the followup here McDowell switches to talk about warrants (reasons) in terms of mental *states* (seeings) rather than mental *facts* (facts about seeings).

I think the tension here is merely apparent. When one says, for instance, "I believe that there is a yellow lemon present because I can see that it is" (or: "because I can see the yellow lemon"), one gives a reason in these 'because...' clauses. But it is not obvious that we should think that the reason is identical to the fact one expresses in the 'because...' clause, as opposed to what the fact is about (in this case: the mental state in question). It could be that this way of talking is a way of specifying a mental state (a seeing) as a reason. Let's grant this, and take McDowell to be committed to the "mental state conception".

In his reply to Dancy McDowell mentions briefly why he rejects the "non-mental fact conception" which Dancy takes him to hold:

If I am asked to give my reason for believing that there is a hummingbird at the feeder, it would be absurd to respond by

simply restating what I believe, and the absurdity is not lessened if in doing so I would be stating a fact. If my experience is a case of seeing how things are, the fact itself exerts a rational influence on me, but only by being experienced, and a sheer statement of the fact makes no sense as a specification of my reason for belief (p. 134).

I think that there are some issues with what McDowell says here. McDowell thinks that if one is asked to give their reason for believing that there is a hummingbird at the feeder, it would be absurd to respond simply by stating that there is a hummingbird at the feeder. But why should we accept this claim? If you ask me what my reason is for believing that there is a hummingbird at the feeder and I say “I believe that because there *is* a hummingbird at the feeder”, or “I believe that because it is *true*”, it is just not obvious that what I am saying is *absurd*, or makes no *sense* as a specification of my reason for belief. Perhaps there will be contexts in which such a response is absurd, but perhaps there will be some contexts in which it is not absurd.

Also, suppose you ask me why you yourself should believe that there is a hummingbird at the feeder. Suppose I reply as follows: “you should believe it because there is a hummingbird at the feeder” or “you should believe it because it is true”. Is this absurd? Not to my ears. If something is true, that is an excellent reason to believe it. A proponent of the “non-mental fact conception” of reasons might add the following. If I answer your question as to why you should believe that *p* by saying that *p* is true (or by saying that it is a fact that *p*), then that fact can become *your* reason, but only if you are entitled to trust me. Of course whether you are entitled to trust me will depend upon various other factors which I don’t assure you of in my response to your original question. But that doesn’t mean that my response to your original question wasn’t perfectly legitimate (a perfectly legitimate move in the game of giving and asking for reasons).

Let’s return to the original question: you ask me what *my* reason is for believing that there is a hummingbird on the feeder. We can admit that on one interpretation of your question the response I mentioned above (“because it is true”) will not be at all *helpful*—it will miss the point of

the question. If, that is, you are asking for the reason *why* I believe that there is a hummingbird at the feeder. For in asking *that* you are looking for an explanation regarding how I got to that belief, how I ended up taking that stance regarding how things are. In response to the question understood *as such* McDowell is surely right that ‘a *sheer* statement of the fact makes no sense as a specification of my reason for belief’ (emphasis added). In response to a question like that, merely stating that there is a hummingbird on the feeder obviously doesn’t address the question. It is likely to prompt an impatient reply: “But *why* do you think that???” To answer that question I have to tell you how I came to hold the belief. So I might say, as McDowell insists, I can *see* that there is a hummingbird on the feeder.

If it is this kind of thought that is driving McDowell’s idea that it would be “absurd” to state the fact in response to a request for your reason for believing that fact, then it strikes me as fine as far as it goes, but it does not undermine the thought that such facts can be among the reasons *for which* we believe as we do. Specifying the reasons for which one believes as they do is a matter of specifying the considerations in the light of which one believes as one does. In the best cases the considerations in the light of which one believes that *p* will be among the reasons there are for believing that *p* (and, in the very best cases, a proponent of the “non-mental fact conception” might say, they will include the *fact* that *p*). But giving the reasons *why* *S* believes as she does, in the sense of explaining how *S* got to her belief, doesn’t have to involve a specification of the reasons for which she believes as she does.

However, McDowell might reply to this point in the following way: in the case he is interested in, where one’s response to the request for a reason is that one sees that there is a hummingbird on the feeder, one isn’t giving any old explanation of one’s believing as one does. One is giving a *rationalizing* explanation. One’s response serves *both* to explain one’s route to the belief, and to explain how that belief is one to which the believer is *entitled* (in a way appropriate for knowledge). McDowell might say, then, that one addresses, in one’s answer, both a question about the reason why, and a question about the reasons for which. There is, McDowell can say, a “dual aspect” to one’s answer insofar as it addresses explanatory and normative concerns.

Suppose we admit this. Does it force us to accept that the fact that one's seeing that there is a hummingbird at the feeder is the reason for which one believes as one does? I don't think so, the "non-mental fact conception" isn't out of the game yet. Let me explain why.

A proponent of an alternative "non-mental fact conception" of (normative) reasons (for which) can agree with the dual aspect point. Such a proponent can say that the answer given in terms of seeing that there is a hummingbird on the feeder *does* have a dual aspect, it's just that the we are to conceive of the dual aspect of the answer differently to how McDowell conceives of it. On the line of thought I am trying to elaborate on McDowell's behalf, McDowell would say that the explanation has a dual aspect in that one's seeing that there is a hummingbird on the feeder can serve both as the reason why one believes that that is so, and the (knowledge grounding entitlement constituting) reason for which one believes that that is so. But a proponent of the "non-mental fact conception" can say that in saying that they see that there is a hummingbird on the feeder one explains why they believe that that is so, but one also speaks to why one's belief is rational, for what one gives by way of an explanation for why one believes as they do is something whose function is—on McDowell's view—to bring the fact that there is a hummingbird on the feeder into plain view. And this fact—they will add—is a conclusive reason to believe that there is a hummingbird on the feeder. That is, on this alternative, what one offers to explain why one believes as one does is a specification of a state which can be the source of a belief (that's one aspect of the answer), but which also enables non-mental facts to serve as the reasons for which subjects believe as they do. By specifying that *S* sees that *p* one implicates the fact that *p* in addressing the issue of the rationality of *S*'s belief.

So here the proponent of the "non-mental fact conception" is *agreeing* with McDowell that, in this context with the question understood in this way, a 'sheer statement of the fact' doesn't provide a satisfactory answer. Why? Because a sheer statement of the fact doesn't have the dual aspect needed to address the explanatory and the normative dimensions of the question. They are also *agreeing* with McDowell that specifying instead that one is in some visual state with the relevant fact as the content *does* provide a satisfactory answer. Why? Because such a statement *does* have

the needed dual aspect. But the proponent of the “non-mental fact conception” is pointing out that it doesn’t at all follow from this that the relevant non-mental fact is not the reason for which the subject believes (nor does it follow that the relevant *mental* state (or fact) *is* the reason for which the subject believes). There is an intelligible alternative story. Because the mental fact obtains (one sees that there is a hummingbird at the feeder) the relevant non-mental fact (the hummingbird is at the feeder) can be the reason for which the subject believes that the hummingbird is at the feeder.

This alternative story rejects mentalistic internalism. Non-mental facts are among the reasons which justify our beliefs. But it retains *something* of the access internalism strand of McDowell’s position. One does have *access* to one’s reasons, as they only count as one’s reasons by being in the scope of one’s perceptual consciousness. Insofar as the layout of one’s perceptual consciousness is reflectively accessible to one, we might even suppose that such reasons are within one’s *reflective* reach (in a sense). And we can also suppose that such reasons are accessible to one in such a way that one can appeal to them in justifying one’s belief. As McDowell insists, endorsing the Sellarsian conception of knowledge requires us to admit that knowing that *p* requires one to be *able* to justify one’s belief that *p* in terms of what warrants one’s belief. This can be incorporated by a proponent of the “non-mental fact conception” of the reasons we have in virtue of seeing. (The ability is manifest when one explains one’s belief in the way I’ve been describing over the last two paragraphs.)

I am not trying to argue for a “non-mental fact conception” of reasons, I am just trying to suggest that there are issues for McDowell’s attempted undermining of it. And it strikes me that the “non-mental fact conception”, as I’ve spelled it out, fits in the McDowellian framework more or less comfortably. (Which is why it is not too surprising that Dancy and others take it to be McDowell’s own view). It seems, then, that we can distinguish two McDowellian Reasons Answers to the question of explanation: (1) an answer which draws on McDowell’s official “mental state conception” of the reasons constituted by seeing (as McDowell understands seeing), and (2) an answer which draws on the “non-mental fact conception” of the reasons constituted by (that is,

provided by) seeing (as McDowell understands seeing).

In this section I've addressed these questions regarding McDowell's view of visually based knowledge:

- (a) Does McDowell's Sellarsian conception of visually based knowledge as a standing in the space of reasons require such knowledge to involve reasoning?
- (b) What's involved in having reasons for visually based knowledge?
- (c) What are reasons for visually based beliefs?

The answer to (1) is 'no'. Making this clear constitutes a partial defence of some of McDowell's framework (namely, the reasons condition, in its expanded form). Since if McDowell's position implied a positive answer to (1) it would be implausible. Visual knowledge doesn't involve reasoning. The internalist aspect of McDowell's thinking helps us answer to (2). The reasons McDowell thinks we have for visually based beliefs are (fact involving) visual states themselves. One part of what it is to have such reasons is to be in such states. But another aspect of it is that one has reflective access to such states. Finally, in response to (3), I showed that McDowell does indeed hold a "mental state conception" of the reasons we have for visually based knowledge. But I also noted that it is not obvious why this is preferable to a "non-mental fact conception", which is not only suggested by some of McDowell's remarks, but seems to fit reasonably well into McDowell's framework.

One way in which McDowell's view is questionable is that it can only apply to knowledge as enjoyed by mature humans (creatures with enough rationality to be *able* to justify their beliefs). McDowell is aware of this, and endorses the restriction. But some think that when it comes to *perceptual* knowledge we should be able to give the same epistemological story across the board (see, e.g., Burge (2003)). McDowell insists that there are different species of knowledge (just like with perception). Some knowledge, which his account applies to, is rationality at work. Other knowledge (non-human animal knowledge) is not that (see McDowell (2011a,b)). It is not obvious that McDowell is correct about this (it is one thing to say that there is logical space for distinguishing species of knowledge like

this, but why *should* we?), but then it is not obvious that the alternative is correct either. This is a murky issue. For the sake of discussion I'll grant McDowell his assumption, and continue with a restriction to mature human knowledge. Thus a McDowellian Reasons Answer applies just to visual knowledge—and visual perception—as it is enjoyed by mature humans.

I turn now to discuss the 'conclusive reasons' element of McDowell's view. I want to ask the fourth of the questions identified above:

- (d) Is the idea that visual knowledge requires *conclusive* reasons defensible?

4.6.2 Seeing and Conclusive Reasons

As we've seen McDowell thinks that fact involving visual perceptual states with the content p give one conclusive reasons to believe that p . They constitute such reasons. They are conclusive reasons in that they guarantee the truth of p . McDowell also calls such reasons 'indefeasible'. He says, the warrant for beliefs that such visual perceptual states provide 'is indefeasible; it *cannot* be undermined' (2011a, p. 31). It seems that the idea that seeings constitute *conclusive* reasons is one way that McDowell could account for the fact, noted in the previous Chapter, that some visual perceptual explanations of knowledge are *exemplary*. But McDowell thinks that there is a mistaken way of thinking 'pervasive in epistemology' which recommends the rejection of this strand in his thinking. He finds this in, for instance, Burge (2003). He puts the idea as follows:

It is typical for discussions of the epistemology of perceptual knowledge to begin with the assumption I have found in Burge, that experience itself cannot provide better than inconclusive warrant for belief. Often this is quickly taken for granted. But if a ground is offered, it is typically something on the lines of Burge's appeal to the fallibility of all our perceptual capacities (p. 36)

McDowell insists that it simply doesn't follow from the fallibility of a perceptual capacity that the best it can *ever* provide is inconclusive warrant.

McDowell says

Certainly Burge is right that all our perceptual capacities are fallible. But we can acknowledge that a capacity is fallible without precluding ourselves from saying that what it is a capacity to do is this: to get into states that consist in having a certain feature of the objective environment perceptually present to one's self-consciously rational awareness. If that is what a capacity is a capacity to do, that is what one does in a non-defective exercise of it. And I have urged that if a perceptual state can be described in those terms, there is no possibility, compatibly with a subject's being in such a state, that things are not as she would believe them to be in the beliefs that the state would warrant. When we acknowledge that a capacity is fallible, we acknowledge that there can be exercises of it that are defective, in that they fail to be cases of what the capacity is specified as a capacity to do. That does not preclude us from holding that in non-defective exercises of a perceptual capacity subjects get into perceptual states that provide *indefeasible* warrant for perceptual beliefs (pp. 37–38).

For instance the human capacity for colour perception is fallible. One can be led astray in the operation of one's capacity to tell what colours things are (e.g., where a lemon seems to one, say, to be red, when it is yellow). One can be fooled thanks to an exercise of a perceptual capacity, any such capacity is thus fallible. But, if one is fooled in a defective exercise of a capacity, and so doesn't get a conclusive warrant, it simply doesn't follow that what one has in a *non*-defective exercise of the same capacity will fall short of giving one a conclusive warrant.

So it seems that there is no straightforward valid move from the fallibility of perceptual capacities to an undermining of McDowell's point that we have indefeasible warrants in cases where operations of perceptual capacities are non-defective.

Still, is McDowell right to think that in non-defective exercises of our perceptual capacities—when one has, say, a fact involving visual experience—we are in possession of conclusive, indefeasible warrants? This

aspect of McDowell's view is targeted for criticism in a paper by Wright (2008) (which responds to McDowell (2008d)). Wright grants McDowell his fact involving view of seeing. But he aims to exploit a gap between this and having a conclusive reason (indefeasible warrant). Wright says

there is an evident gap between direct awareness of a situation in virtue of which *P* is true and the acquisition of warrant for the belief that *P*, even for one sufficiently conceptually *savvy* to ensure that the direct awareness presents as an appearance that *P* (p. 398).

And Wright attempts to justify the claim that there is an 'evident gap' with some thought experiments (I'll consider just one, but what I say in response, on behalf of McDowell, can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the other case too). Wright says

One consideration which opens the gap is very familiar in the externalist tradition... Driving in Barn Façade County, but in all innocence of the locally distinctive "layout of reality", the one-in-a-thousand real barn confronting me at the turn of the road ahead may draw my perceptual attention. I am directly aware of the barn, its location, the colour of its roof, its approximate dimensions, and so on. Yet scores of writers have scrupled over the suggestion that, in the circumstances, I *know* that there is a barn up the road, of such-and-such approximate dimensions, and with such-and-such a colour of roof. Whether they are right to do so, and if so why, are issues. The circumstances are such as to encourage false judgements about the things of which I am directly aware, they are such that I am merely lucky to be right in this instance, they are such that my claim is defeasible by improved information. McDowell doubtless has proposals to make about the proper handling of such veteran examples. But by writing... as if perceptual uptake were *tout court* sufficient for warranted belief, he writes as though this issues they raise do not exist.

Direct awareness of states of affairs that make *P* true is one thing; warranted belief that *P*, for one fully apprised of what it takes for *P* to be true, is something else. (p. 398).

Wright seems to be saying that there are (arguably) cases, such as Barn Façade cases, in which one has an experience in which the fact that p is manifest, yet in which one doesn't have a warrant to believe that p . We can add: if that is so, then *a fortiori*, one doesn't have a *conclusive* warrant to believe that p . And so, contra McDowell, such states of seeing *don't* always constitute conclusive reasons for believing contents corresponding to the facts they involve. For instance, I see the barn and have a visual experience in which the fact that the barn's roof is red comes into view. On McDowell's view that (my seeing) constitutes a conclusive reason to believe that the barn's roof is red. Wright rejoins: surely not if one enjoys that experience (as one surely can) in Barn Façade County.

One reply open to McDowell here is to exploit a distinction between propositional and doxastic warrant (on this see Kvanvig and Menzel (1990)). For Wright seems to run these together. One's seeing that the barn's roof is red (in McDowell's sense of 'seeing that') is something which guarantees the truth of the content: *the barn's roof is red*. There is a truth-guaranteeing relation between the perceptual state and the relevant content. This qualifies the perceptual state to serve as something which propositionally justifies or warrants a belief in that content. This is why the perceptual state itself constitutes a reason. Note that here we can talk about a subject's having propositional warrant even when the subject doesn't hold the belief: the belief (content) that the barn's roof is red can be (propositionally) warranted for me (in virtue of the fact that I see that the barn's roof is red) even if I don't believe that the barn's roof is red. Suppose I do form the belief. In that case I form a belief for which I have a propositional warrant. But that doesn't mean that my *believing* that the barn's roof is red is warranted. Having propositional warrant for a belief which one holds doesn't entail having doxastic warrant. McDowell insists that visual perceptual states constitute one's being propositionally warranted, he doesn't have to insist that they constitute one's being doxastically warranted.

The considerations which Wright exploits (arguably) support the idea that if one believes that the barn has a red roof, on the basis of one's perception, when one is ignorant of being in Barn Façade County, one will most likely fail to be warranted in believing that the barn's roof is red (because, e.g., such a belief would involve epistemic luck in a way that is

inconsistent with doxastic warrant). There is nothing in this claim that McDowell needs to deny in claiming what he does: that visual states, given their fact involving nature, provide one with conclusive, indefeasible, *propositional* warrant to believe that the barn's roof is red. Perceptual states put one in excellent positions that one may not be able to exploit to one's epistemic advantage in given circumstances.

But what if, in the case Wright describes, one believes that the barn's roof is red on the basis of one's conclusive (propositional) reason? (One's visual perception). Even then McDowell doesn't have to claim that one will be doxastically warranted in believing that the barn's roof is red. It is open to McDowell to think that perceptual states contribute towards one's being doxastically warranted, even though there is (he can suppose) much more to being doxastically warranted (that is, various other conditions that need to be satisfied for doxastic warrant).

On McDowell's view, I take it, one's propositional visual perceptual warrant is indefeasible or conclusive in this sense: nothing one adds by way of collateral information to the information that I see that the barn's roof is red will result in an overall state of information which doesn't provide truth-guaranteeing propositional support for the belief that the barn's roof is red. Nothing one adds, that is, will undermine or defeat the propositional warrant provided by the perceptual state (consistently with one retaining the perceptual state). For seeing that the barn's roof is red entails that the barn's roof is red. Any information one adds to this will not result in an overall state of information which doesn't entail that the barn's roof is red. (Things are different if one conceives of the relevant perceptual basis in non-factive terms).

Wright cannot consistently deny that visual perception provides such indefeasible *propositional* warrant, since he *grants* McDowell's fact involving view of visual perception. When Wright says that 'my claim', e.g., that the barn's roof is red, 'is defeasible by improved information', he has to mean that if one avails oneself of the information to the effect that one is in Barn Façade County one will no longer be (if one was at all) warranted in *believing* that the barn's roof is red. (Unless one is also availed somehow, perhaps by testimony, of the fact that one is looking at the only real barn). Fine. But this doesn't conflict with McDowell's view that the perceptual warrant is indefeasible *propositional* warrant in the way I've

explained. Doxastic warrant for p can be defeasible even if propositional warrant for p is indefeasible.

Wright says that McDowell thinks that ‘perceptual uptake [is] *tout court* sufficient for warranted belief’. But McDowell doesn’t have to think this if ‘warranted belief’ means being warranted in believing (doxastic warrant). But he does think this if ‘warranted belief’ means having propositional warrant to believe. But in that case Wright doesn’t have anything which tells against McDowell’s position. Wright says ‘Direct awareness of states of affairs that make P true is one thing; warranted belief that P ... is something else’. McDowell doesn’t have to accept this, for all Wright has said, if by ‘warranted belief’ Wright means having propositional warrant to believe. But if by ‘warranted belief’ Wright means being warranted in believing, then it is open to McDowell to agree with that.

In effect, I take it, Wright is accusing McDowell of conflating factiveness with indefeasibility. This is something Williamson (2000) also warns against:

One can have a warrant to assert a mathematical proposition by grasping a proof of it, and then cease to have warrant to assert it merely in virtue of gaining new evidence about expert mathematicians’ utterances, without forgetting anything... [But what this shows is that the] notion of indefeasibility should not be confused with factiveness... [For] [g]rasping a proof of a mathematical proposition is a factive way of having warrant to assert it: a necessary condition on grasping a proof of p is that p is true. Factiveness does not entail indefeasibility (p. 265).

McDowell can say: factiveness in doxastic warrant does not entail indefeasibility of doxastic warrant. But this doesn’t bear on the key claim that is pivotal in McDowell’s epistemology of perception, which we can now put in these terms: visual perceptual states, owing to their fact involving nature, constitute indefeasible *propositional* warrants. In the right circumstances one can exploit such warrants to one’s epistemic advantage. When one does, those propositional warrants (reasons) will go into one’s being doxastically warranted (whatever else that requires), and will be part of what makes it the case that one *knows*.

4.7 Conclusion

In the last two sections I've tried to clarify some of the key aspects of the epistemology side of McDowell's view of visual knowledge. I began by outlining how in McDowell's work the reasons condition takes an expanded form. Visually based knowledge that p requires one to have conclusive propositional warrant for belief in p , but also a level of rational responsiveness to one's propositional warrant constituting reasons. We can now say that such rational responsiveness to such propositional reasons is part of what is required for one to be doxastically warranted in believing that p (where one's belief counts as knowledge). Part of what's involved in such responsiveness, for McDowell, is being able to offer a rational explanation of one's visually based knowledge when one knows that p . McDowell thinks that the conclusive reasons we have which ground visually based knowledge are states of seeing. We have such reasons, and can be rationally responsive to them, partly because they are reflectively accessible to us. Some of these aspects of McDowell's thinking are defensible. The reasons condition doesn't collapse into or imply some implausible wholesale inferentialism about knowledge. And the conclusive reasons strand in McDowell's thinking can be defended against certain salient criticisms.

In this discussion we have also witnessed what it would be for visual perception to be reason giving. We have considered some examples, and it certainly doesn't seem to be offensive to common sense to take visual perception to have a reason giving role. So, on the basis of this discussion, and the brief motivations I offered for the reasons condition earlier, I think it is a fair assessment to say that, as a partial answer to the question of explanation, a McDowellian Reasons Answer looks to be in good shape with respect to these components:

- (1) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition.
- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied.

Given, that is, a restriction to mature human knowledge. Thus, with respect to these aspects, a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation looks plausible.

But, it will be remembered, a Reasons Answer aims to explain how visual perception is a means of knowing in terms of aspects of the *nature* of visual perception. Thus, a Reasons Answer also involves this component:

- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

We have seen how this is something McDowell endorses. The idea is that because seeing is conceptual and fact involving—because it has *that* nature—it is reason giving. Do we, then, have a satisfactory Reasons Answer in the full McDowellian Reasons Answer? It depends on whether we are entitled to rely on McDowell's theory of seeing. The argument we considered is that if we don't accept this theory, then visual perception can't have a reason giving role (and, disastrously, minimal empiricism can't be sustained). I turn now to an attempt to undermine this argument.

Chapter 5

Visual Perception as Reason Giving (2)

In this Chapter I want to present considerations which suggest that McDowell's conceptualism about seeing is not required in order to capture visual perception's reason giving role. To do this I will outline an alternative view of seeing, which seems to capture visual perception's reason giving role, but which doesn't require seeing to be conceptual. The aim of presenting the alternative is dialectical, I don't mean to endorse the alternative. Furthermore, my aim is not to deny McDowell's conceptualist view of seeing, just the claim that it is required to make sense of visual perception's reason giving role. I'll end with a conclusion about where this leaves the Reasons Answer.

5.1 The Relationalist View of Seeing

As I suggested in Chapter 1 thing seeing, as we ordinarily understand it, involves these two crucial features (among others): (1) it is relational, and (2) it is a mode of conscious (visual) awareness. If I see the mouldy lemon on the table, then there must be a mouldy lemon, on the table, which I am related to by seeing it. And if I am *seeing* it, I am consciously aware of it. This plausibly requires that in seeing the object it looks or appears or seems some way or ways to me. That is to say, it plausibly requires my seeing to involve a visual experience with some conscious character. In fact I do see a mouldy lemon on the desk before me, the conscious character of my experience is something I would describe by saying: I see a

lemon which has a brownish-yellow colour, but with grey and green blobs (the mould!), it has sagging skin, it is sort of lemon shaped, it is a little smaller than the average lemon, for it has shrunk, it is well illuminated, and so on. My description enables you to exploit your knowledge of how things as described typically look. You can thereby imagine how things are for me, in my visual consciousness, in seeing the lemon—“what it is like for me” to see the lemon on this occasion. (I might also have put my description in these terms: it looks to me as if there is a lemon there which is ...).

A mouldy lemon is a material object, but the same sorts of considerations as those just rehearsed apply for other sorts of entities I can clap my eyes on. I see the lemon fall from the table. I witness an *event*. Seeing an event is a matter of being related to it. It involves conscious awareness, and thus an experience with some conscious character or other. On this occasion, when I see the lemon fall from the table, I have an experience the character of which I might describe in terms of the look of the lemon (as described above), but also some of the visible dynamic properties it instantiates, e.g., the speed at which it falls, the way it makes contact with the floor when it lands, and what happens when it does (e.g., its falling apart), and so on. These features determine the look of the event. And they can all figure in a faithful description of the conscious character of the experience I have in seeing the event.

In the previous Chapter I presented McDowell’s fact involving view of seeing in terms of how it accounted for the aforementioned features of visual perception—(1) and (2) above. I will follow this strategy for the alternative I’m about to present. This alternative is inspired by the views of perception presented in Snowdon (1980, 1990, 2005), Campbell (2002), Martin (2002, 2004, 2006), Travis (2004, 2007), Fish (2009), Brewer (2011), Kalderon (2011a,b), and Soteriou (2011). (And for helpful discussion on the sort of view these authors offer, see Crane (2006)). These views have their differences, but I aim to capture some of the common ground.

5.1.1 Relationality

Here is Brewer's initial expression of his version of the sort of view I want to consider:

the most fundamental characterization of our perceptual relation with the physical world is to be given in terms of a relation of conscious acquaintance between perceiving subjects and the particular mind-independent physical objects that are presented to them in perception...[P]erceptual presentation irreducibly consists in conscious acquaintance with mind-independent physical objects. It is not to be elucidated or further understood, either in terms of a relation of direct acquaintance with mind-dependent entities that are suitably related to mind-independent things, or in terms of a relation with some kind of representational content that 'concerns' such things...[T]his characterization of perceptual presentation as conscious acquaintance with mind-independent physical objects provides the most fundamental elucidation of which modification of consciousness any specific such experience is: the fundamental nature of perceptual experience is to be given precisely by citing and/or describing those very mind independent physical objects of acquaintance (2011, p. 94).

Consider also the following from Soteriou

at the heart of that proposal is a view of the conscious character of successful perception [e.g., seeing] that denies that the conscious character of that sort of experience [e.g., seeing] is simply determined by the obtaining of a mental state which has an intentional content with veridicality conditions – irrespective of whether one thinks of the intentional content of the mental state as object-dependent, and irrespective of whether one thinks of the mental state as factive. (2011, pp. 224–225)

Soteriou elaborates this as follows

The idea that the conscious character of experience is not simply determined by its representational properties is a familiar one. Some hold that conscious experiences have non-representational, phenomenal qualities – psychological properties that contribute to what it is like for the subject to have the experience but which are not simply determined by the experience’s possession of an intentional content with veridicality conditions [e.g., Peacocke (1983)]. The relationalist can be understood as making a similar claim. But rather than simply appealing to psychological but non-representational properties, the relationalist appeals to a psychological but non-representational relation – a psychological relation whose obtaining contributes to what it is like for the subject to be having the experience, but which is not simply determined by the experience’s possession of an intentional content with veridicality conditions...[I]t is the actual obtaining of the relevant psychological but non-representational relation that contributes to the conscious character of successful perception [e.g., seeing], and the mere representation of such a relation does not adequately account for the phenomenology (p. 225).

I’ll call the view in question here the ‘relationalist view’ of seeing. This is misleading in a sense, since, as noted, all sides agree that seeing is a *relation* (if one sees x one is thereby related to x). But the label is apt because, as these quotes make clear, one of the defining features of the view (or cluster of views) concerns the nature and role of relationality in seeing; that is, the way relationality is used in giving a constitutive account of the conscious *experiences* involved in seeing (and the conscious character of seeing), in a distinctive non-representational way (see below for more on this). Not every view of seeing will agree that the conscious experiences involved in seeing are themselves constitutively relational, even if seeing is. And some who do agree that the conscious experiences involved in seeing are constitutively relational think of this in representational terms (e.g., McDowell).

It is part of our ordinary conception of seeing that it is a form of conscious awareness and so involves visual experience. The idea that seeing *involves* visual experience allows different theoretical understandings. One might take it that seeing is a composite state which constitutively involves visual experience as one element among others, including an “external” condition that the object of perception exists and is, say, causally related to the experience (compare: knowledge is a composite state which involves *belief* as an element, and truth as an external condition). The relationalist view doesn’t think of the “involvement” of visual experience in seeing in this way. On the relationalist view seeing an entity *x* *just is* a sort of visual experience of *x*. Thus, on the relationalist view there is a sort of visual experience of *x* the being in of which is necessary *and sufficient* for seeing *x*. This means that those features of seeing an entity we highlighted in Chapter 1 are features of the distinctive sort of visual experience of *x* which seeing *x* is. Thus the relational view holds to a relational construal of the *experiences* “involved” in (which are) seeings. The sort of *visual experience* one has in seeing *x* constitutively requires the existence of *x*, and a relation between the perceiver and *x*.

A visual experience of *x* which is a seeing of *x*, on the relationalist view, fundamentally consists in a *non-representational* relation between a perceiver and *x* (where *x* is an entity in non-mental spatial reality, like a mouldy lemon, or the lemon falling from the table). Such experiences don’t have, as part of their fundamental nature, representational (intentional) contents (conceptual or otherwise). Thus, such experiences don’t involve, as part of their fundamental nature, perceptual reference to entities (and so they are not relational in that way). Such experiences don’t, as part of their fundamental nature, involve object-dependent intuitional content, for that is representational content (and so they are not relational in that way). Visual experiences which are seeings don’t, as part of their fundamental nature, involve actualizations of conceptual capacities. Thus, seeing isn’t fact involving as it is on McDowell’s (early) view of seeing.

We can express the non-representational relation which experiences which are seeings fundamentally consist in in the following ways: an experience which is a seeing is fundamentally a relation of conscious visual awareness between a perceiver and a perceptible entity; it is fundamen-

tally a relation of perceptual acquaintance between a perceiver and a perceptible entity; it is fundamentally a relation in which a perceptible entity is presented (or present) to a perceiver; it is fundamentally a relation in which a perceptible entity is *there* for perceiver; and so on. The relation is basic.

What does it mean to say that those experiences which are seeings *fundamentally* consist in such a relation? Or that it is part of their *fundamental nature* to consist in such a relation? The idea is that the relevant relation captures an aspect of the essence of those experiences which are seeings, and is such as to determine the most fundamental (or specific) kind of experience those experiences are. And this idea involves an assumption that, as Martin (2006) puts it

we can make sense of the idea that there are some privileged classifications of individuals, both concrete objects and events, and that our talk of what is essential to a given individual tracks our understanding of the kinds of thing it is. [The assumption is:] entities (both objects and events) can be classified by species and genus; for all such entities there is a most specific answer to the question, ‘What is it?’ (p. 361).

Martin goes on to spell out how this applies to our current concerns

In relation to the mental, and to perception in particular, [the assumption is that] for mental episodes or states there is a unique answer to this question [‘What is it?’] which gives its most specific kind; it tells us what essentially the event or episode is. In being a member of this kind it will thereby be a member of the other, more generic, kinds as well (p. 361).

On the relationalist view, a seeing of x is a sort of experience which is fundamentally a non-representational relation between a perceiver and x . That gives the most specific answer to the relevant ‘What is it?’ question concerning the sort of experience that seeing is. To see a mouldy lemon on the table is to have a visual experience which fundamentally consists in a relation to the mouldy lemon. It is a matter, simply, of the presentation of the lemon to visual consciousness. To see the lemon falling from

the table is to have a visual experience which fundamentally consists in a relation to the event of the lemon's falling from the table. It is a matter, simply of being (as we might also say) visually acquainted with a particular event.

As Martin also makes clear, if we construe the relationalist view in this way, the relationalist is committed to a claim distinctive of disjunctivism. Suppose I see a yellow lemon. Given that it is of the *nature* of my experience to involve a relation to the lemon, which, as Martin says, implies that it—my experience—involves that mind-independent object 'as a constituent' (p. 354), then the specific kind of experience I have in seeing the lemon could not occur in a case where I don't see the lemon (and so where there is no lemon to be seen). And so the specific kind of experience I have when I see the lemon could not occur in a case where the lemon is absent yet I have a hallucinatory experience which is subjectively indistinguishable from the experience I have in seeing the lemon. This is a denial of what Martin (p. 357) calls the 'Common Kind Assumption'. (The denial that a fully veridical visual experience (e.g., one which is a non-illusory seeing) and a subjectively matching hallucinatory experience are of the same *specific* or *fundamental* kind). This is clearly in the spirit of McDowell's disjunctive approach (outlined earlier), in which he rejects the so-called 'highest common factor' conception of perceptual experiences.

The relationalist view of seeing obviously captures the relationality of seeing, which is one aspect of our ordinary conception of seeing that we want a view of seeing to capture. But what about the idea that seeing involves experiences with some conscious character or other? I turn to discuss this now.

5.1.2 Conscious Character and Unity in Experience

Suppose I see a mouldy lemon on the table. I've been discussing an example of such seeing and I have described some of the details of the conscious character of my seeing. But if the only information we have is that I see a mouldy lemon, then, as I said in Chapter 1, from just this information we have pretty much no idea what the character of my experience is. Instances of 'S sees x' do convey that S has a visual experience of some x,

but not what the specific character of *S*'s experience is. How the mouldy lemon appears to me, in my experience of it, will depend upon a whole host of factors to do with the lemon (and how it looks), my perceptual sensitivities, the environmental conditions in which I see the lemon, and so on. But when I do see the mouldy lemon I will have an experience of the lemon with some specific conscious character; it will look some way or ways to me. (Note that this is consistent with the lemon's looking some very *determinable* ways to me).

We saw above that this—the specific conscious character of an experience in any given case—is something that some theories, including McDowell's, aim to capture in terms of the representational content of the experience. What can we say on the relationalist view? A relationalist can say that aspects of the conscious character of experiences which are seeings are constitutively determined, at least in part, by the mind-independent objects of perception—the *constituents* of the experience. Aspects of the world can 'shape the contours of the subject's conscious experience' (Martin (2004), p. 64). Here is Campbell's version of this point

On a Relational View, the phenomenal character of your experience, as you look around the room [i.e., when your experience is a seeing], is constituted by the actual layout of the room itself: which particular objects are there, their intrinsic properties, such as colour and shape, and how they are arranged in relation to one another and to you (2002, p. 116).

On the relationalist view, as I'm understanding it, aspects of how things seem to one in seeing the things one sees are constitutively determined by the things that are present in one's visual consciousness (thanks to the relation one stands in to them in experiencing them). The mouldy lemon itself is part of what constitutes how things appear to me when I see it.

But now, to take a more pleasant case, suppose that part of the character of my experience in seeing the lemon is something I would describe in terms of the fresh yellowish look that the lemon presents. I might employ various linguistic devices to offer such a description. For instance, I might say "the lemon looks yellow to me", or "I see a *yellow* lemon". (Here the special emphasis, or stress if spoken, aims to communicate something

about the character of my experience—which is not to say that information about the character of my experience is semantically encoded in the sentence type I employ). How can a relationalist capture *this* aspect of the character of an experience? The quote from Campbell above indicates that one thing a relationalist can say is that *features*, as well as things which have those features, can be part of what constitutively determines the conscious character of an experience. So, when I see the lemon and it looks yellow to me, the aspect of the character of my experience corresponding to the yellowness of the lemon, is determined by a feature: its very yellowness. (We might put it in this way instead: the feature is the yellowish *look* of the lemon; in a non-illusory case this may just be the feature the lemon has of being yellow, its yellowness, or else it may be the feature it has of looking yellow).

The relationalist, then, can appeal to what we would intuitively count as visible features as aspects of what goes into determining the conscious character of experiences. Putting things in this way is too weak to capture a distinctive commitment. For it can be understood as just an affirmation of the claim made in Chapter 1 that some features we count as visible (e.g., colour features), are visible in a phenomenological sense. But a proponent of a representational view can agree with this. For on such a view the colour of the lemon, say, can be part of what determines the character of an experience had in seeing the lemon. It plays that role, for instance, when it is appropriately represented in a veridical experience of the lemon. (When, say, in seeing the yellow lemon, it is seen as being yellow in a fully veridical way). But, I take it, the relationalist will want to make a more specific and distinctive claim: features go into determining the conscious character of experience in much the way that the things which have such features do. *Not*, then, by being represented, but by being *present* in experience; by being on one end of a non-representational relation—the relation at the heart of the relationalist proposal.

So features, as well as things that have features, are constituents of experience on this sort of relationalist view. In the jargon of Chapter 1, this means that the relationalist regards some visible features as visible not only in the phenomenological sense, but in the *object* sense. Some features, such as the yellowness of the lemon, are potential objects of visual perception. Moreover, on the sort of relationalist view I'm outlin-

ing, when a feature is visible *to one* in the phenomenological sense, this is at least in part determined by its being visible *to one* in the object sense. More simply, its being *seen*.

Given this, the relationalist has to have a way of conceiving of features which is such that they are apt to be objects of visual perception. If the relationalist accepts what we are ordinarily committed to regarding ‘object visibility’—and so doesn’t, in the development of the theory, reject or revise this aspect of our ordinary conception of visual perception—then the relationalist will thus conceive of those features which they count as visible in the object sense as spatial entities which look some ways. As noted in Chapter 1 above, one way to go here is to regard features as property instances or tropes. And as also noted in that Chapter, this is how, for instance, Kalderon (2011a) thinks of things in his relationalist theory of visual perception. (The relevant sections of Chapter 1 regarding these remarks are section (1.2.1) and the first part of section (1.2.2), and section (1.3.2)).

There is, then, a difference between the relationalist view and McDowell’s view. The determining role that entities and their visible features have, with respect to the conscious character of experiences that are seeings, is not, on the relationalist view, mediated by representation in any sense. In seeing, entities and their features—aspects of objective reality—are, as McDowell says, ‘*there* for a subject, perceptually *present* to her’ (2011, p. 245). This enables those aspects of objective reality themselves to determine (aspects of) “what it is like for one”. But the relationalist insists that this doesn’t, contra McDowell, require intuitional or fact-involving, *representation*.

With respect to accounting for conscious character, I think the relationalist view needs a bit more development than what I’ve given it so far—at least for ordinary cases of seeing which are familiar to us. I’ll explore this now.

I am sitting at my desk writing, I pause, and look over at the yellow lemon on the desk. It is, fortunately, a fresh lemon. It is well illuminated, has a lively bright yellow colour. It is unobstructed and sits on the brown surface of the desk in isolation. It casts a shadow on the white wall in the background. I see it, and I see it in this setting, and I see the setting for

what it is. I also see *the lemon* for what it is. In describing the character of my experience I want to say: “it looks yellow to me”, or “I see it as yellow in colour”, or “I see *its* yellow colour” or “I see its *yellow* colour”.

In describing the character of my experience I miss something out if I don't get across how, in my experience of the lemon, it looks to *have* a colour; the yellow colour perceptually manifest to me seems to me to be *inherent* in the lemon. If I were to attempt to describe the character of my experience simply by listing the entities which I am perceptually related to—it, its yellowness, and so on—I would certainly not do justice to how things are with me visually. It seems that in this case there is a phenomenological datum that needs to be understood and accounted for, pertaining to, for want of a better term, *unity*. We might say: the lemon and its yellowness are somehow and in some sense unified in experience (in the conscious character of experience). This sort of phenomenological feature—what I'll call a ‘unity-aspect’ of the conscious character of the experience—is not special to the case I am describing. It is common in cases of seeing. Many cases of seeing have various unity-aspects—e.g., I see a red cube for what it is, my experience “exhibits” the cube as cubic and red, it thus has a conscious character with at least two unity-aspects—one pertaining to the cube's being cubic, the other to its being red.

I think that it is fair to say that it is in part because typical cases of seeing involve visual experiences with such unity-aspects that representational views of the conscious character of such experiences are very appealing, and plausible. Take, for instance, McDowell's early view, which we have discussed at length. Of the case I am discussing, McDowell can say this: I see the lemon, and it looks yellow to me. There is a unity-aspect to my experience here, the yellow seems to be inherent in the lemon. My experience gets to have this character thanks to the fact that its *representational content* is the conceptually composed worldly fact: *that the lemon is yellow*. The *content* of the experience, which is what, on this view, constitutes the conscious character of the experience, represents the lemon *as being* yellow. There is something like predicational unity in the content, the object is represented as falling under the concept LEMON in the very content of the experience itself. This unity in the representational content is what, McDowell can say, accounts for the correspond-

ing unity-aspect of the conscious character of the experience. And we shouldn't forget that, for McDowell, it is not as if representational content is some mental or inner thing. And so it is not as if on McDowell's picture unity is constructed in experience. The content is a perceptible fact, an aspect of how things are. The unity in conscious experience is then just a manifestation of an aspect of how things are anyway.

To rehearse some of what we observed of McDowell's view in the previous Chapter, we can add this: In seeing the lemon, and having an experience with the content *that the lemon is yellow*, and with the aforementioned unity-aspect to its conscious character, it is not as if the experience involves *active* predication. It doesn't involve an exercise of concepts so as there is conceptualization in the sense in which that is something a subject intentionally does. In the experience the relevant conceptual capacities are *actualized* so as one is *passively* receptive to the yellow lemon as the yellow lemon it is. One takes in the lemon (it becomes the object of one's perception), and takes in (as the content of perception) the worldly fact: that the lemon is yellow. The *fact* is conceptual. That is why, for it to figure in one's experiential situation, and for the lemon to be before the mind as an object of perception, experience has to involve the actualization of conceptual capacities, on McDowell's view.

The question is, what can we say, on behalf of the *relationalist*, about the unity-aspect to the conscious character of the experience I have in seeing the yellow lemon? Is it enough to point out just that I see the lemon, and I see its yellowness and in seeing these entities they are constituents of my experience which go into constituting aspects of its character? Isn't this just to *list* (some of) the things I see, and insist on their character determining role, whilst simply ignoring the unity-aspect? For the relationalist things don't have to be quite so straightforward. There are a number of points to consider which might help us to see this, and help us to see what a relationalist account of the unity-aspects of perceptual consciousness might look like.

First, the things we are considering, the lemon, and its yellowness, are not things that float free of each other and require some form of unification. The lemon is not a bare particular. It is not something devoid of properties. In actual fact, given how things are in the world, the lemon is propertied in certain ways; including the way pertaining to the fact that it

is *yellow*. The lemon which I see has yellowness—that trope, if that’s our theory—as part of its (contingent) being. In a different possible world, it (or its counterpart) may be quite different (it might be red). And in this world the lemon *was* different—when it was unripe it was green. And in this world it might again be different (when it goes mouldy, it acquires a brownish-grey colour). But it, here and now, is yellow. Yellowness *does* inhere in the lemon. The lemon is a particular thing, propertied in many ways.

The lemon has yellowness as part of its being. Having said this much, the relationalist can then add that in my visual perception of the yellow lemon I see a particular which is (in fact) propertied as such. The relationalist can then exploit this to their advantage in explaining how the lemon itself can go into determining the conscious character of my experience, and, importantly, its unity-aspects. The relationalist can say that when I see the lemon, and the conscious character of my experience has the unity-aspect pertaining to “yellowness inhering in the lemon” or “the lemon being yellow”, it is partly because I am perceptually related, in a non-representational way, to the *lemon propertied as such*—the lemon *qua yellow* lemon. That is, the unity which is an aspect of the being of the lemon is part of what determines the conscious character of my experience in my being acquainted with the lemon—in the case in question. I can report on my perceptual situation by saying that I see a lemon, *and* I see its yellowness. And this, let’s suppose, is all quite true. But this, a relationalist can say, is true, in the case in question, because I see a *yellow lemon*—that is, a particular which is propertied in that it involves yellowness as an aspect of its being.

Shortly, I’ll mention some similarities between this way of accounting for the unity-aspects in experience, and the McDowellian account just considered. But before doing so here are some important qualifications.

The idea here is not that whenever one sees a particular which is propertied in way *F*, then one’s experience will, as it were, “exhibit” the particular to one as an *F* thing. (To put it another way, the idea is not that whenever one sees a particular which is propertied in way *F*, then one will have an experience of the particular which has a unity-aspect to its conscious character pertaining to the particular’s being *F*). For a start, the account applies only to properties which we take to be visible in the

phenomenological sense. We might quibble about which features to include in this category, and which not. But however this gets resolved, we do ordinarily think that some features definitely are visible in this sense, and we do ordinarily think that some features definitely are not visible in this sense.

For instance, the yellowness of the lemon we've been considering is visible, but its atomic structure isn't. (Of course, one might represent an atomic structure in some way, in a diagram or pictorial model, but what is thus visible is the representation, not the representatum; rather like with numbers and representations of numerals). The lemon before me has atomic structure *A*. So, in seeing it I see a lemon-with-*A*—I see a particular which is propertied in that way. The relationalist will add that I therefore stand in a non-representational relation of acquaintance to a lemon-with-*A*. I have an experience with a certain conscious character, determined at least in part by the lemon-with-*A*, which is a constituent of my experience. Do I therefore have an experience the conscious character of which involves a unity-aspect pertaining to the lemon's *being A*? Surely not. That aspect of the lemon's being doesn't, as it were, "show up" in my experience. The relationalist isn't committed otherwise, for the account applies only to visible *F*s. (And a proponent of a McDowellian view will have to say something similar in answering the question: why is it that when I see the lemon, the fact that *it has such-and-such an atomic structure* is not visually manifest to me? At least part of the answer is presumably that such facts don't involve *visible* features).

But even if we restrict the range of *F*s to visible *F*s, then the relationalist still isn't committed to the idea that whenever one sees a particular which is propertied in way *F*, then one's experience will, as it were, "exhibit" the particular to one as an *F* thing. The account applies only to those *F*s which are visible to one *from one's vantage point*. The account applies, to put it another way, only to those features of the particular which one sees in seeing the particular. And, of course, which features of *x* are seen in seeing *x* is something which is hostage to all sorts of factors, to do with, e.g., the particular in question (and how it looks), perceptual sensitivities, environmental conditions and so on. With my glasses on the *determinate shapes* of some distant objects are visible to me, this is often not the case when I take my glasses off, even though I can still see the

objects. (And again a proponent of a McDowellian view will have to say something similar in answering the following question about a case where I see an object, which is *F*, and where *F* is a visible feature, but where I don't see it to be *F*: why is it that when I see this object the fact that it is *F* is not visually manifest in my experience? Presumably the answer will make reference to the fact that the object's *F*-ness is not visible from my vantage point—for perhaps *F* is a determinate shape property, and the object is distant, and I take off my glasses).

A further qualification is that the idea is not that if one sees a particular which is propertied in way *F*, *and sees the particular's F-ness*, then one's experience will, as it were, “exhibit” the particular to one as an *F* thing. We can bring this out by considering illusory conjunctions. Robertson—a neuroscientist who has worked with individuals who are susceptible to illusory conjunctions—describes a typical example of an illusory conjunction as follows:

For instance, color and shape can be detected independently and misconjoined in perception to form an erroneously colored “object.” For instance, when shown a brief presentation of a red A and a blue B, participants might be quite confident they saw a red B and a blue A (2004, p. 193).

Such cases, so described, are reasonably interpreted in this way: an individual sees an object which has an A shape, and sees another object which has a B shape, the individual sees A's redness, and sees B's blueness, still the A object doesn't look red to the individual, and the B object doesn't look blue to the individual. So, plausibly, illusory conjunction cases are cases where an individual *S* sees an object *a* (propertied in way *F*), and sees the *F*-ness of *a*, yet where there is no unity-aspect in *S*'s experience corresponding to the fact that *a* is *F*. Thus it can't be that *whenever* one sees a particular which is propertied in way *F*, *and sees the particular's F-ness*, then one's experience will, as it were, “exhibit” the particular to one as an *F* thing—even if that is the norm.

For the relationalist, even if a propertied particular—an *a*-which-is-*F*—and a trope—*a*'s *F*-ness—are constituents of my experience, that won't add up to my experience having a unity-aspect pertaining to *a*'s being *F*. Certain other conditions need to be satisfied. Some of these

will be empirical enabling conditions. For instance, conditions which ensure the proper functioning of the visual system.

Some of these conditions specifically concern the causal underpinnings of experience's having conscious characters which have unity-aspects. Unless the relevant conditions are satisfied, one won't have an experience with unity-aspects or one will have an experience in which something has gone wrong in the unity-aspects—even if the relevant propertied particular is a constituent of the experience. In illusory conjunction cases, the relationalist can say that the relevant propertied particular *is* a constituent of the experience, but some of the specific conditions required for the presence of veridical unity-aspects aren't satisfied. (A proponent of a McDowellian view too will have to say something similar. The McDowellian can say that when the subject of the illusory conjunction sees the red A shape, she doesn't see it as red, and so the fact that it is red is not visually manifest to her. Why not? Because the specific enabling conditions required for the presence of veridical unity-aspects in experience are not satisfied).

What these empirical conditions are is a matter for vision science. One plausible idea regarding such conditions comes from reflection on the so the so-called 'binding problem'. The binding problem is a problem about how the visual system produces unified perceptions of objects given that it processes visual information about the features of single objects in independent streams. As Campbell notes, drawing on Zeki (1993), 'there is much converging evidence that different properties of an object, such as colour, shape, motion, size, or orientation are processed in different processing streams' (2002, p. 30). So, to deliver the perceptions it does—with their unity-aspects—the visual systems needs to *bind*, as it were, properties in the right way, a 'specific colour and shape, for example, have to be put together as the colour and shape of a single object, just when they are the colour and shape of a single object. We do not have perception of an individual object until this Binding Problem has been solved...' (Campbell, p. 30). (Note that the problem that the visual system has to solve is actually not as straightforward as my presentation here suggests, it will serve our purposes, but for a more detailed discussion, and a distinction between *seven* types of binding, see Treisman 1996. The discussion also contains useful summaries of psychological research

and discussion of different hypotheses regarding solutions to the binding problems).

One well supported hypothesis about how the visual system solves the binding problem is Treisman's Feature Integration Theory (see especially Treisman (1993); Treisman and Gelade (1980)). Campbell offers a helpful summary in the following passage:

[Treisman's theory holds that] there is in the visual system a 'master map' of locations, which is scanned by a window (variable in size) of attention... When the window selects a particular location on the master map, the features currently found at that location on all the various specialized feature maps are selected, put together to constitute an 'object token', and compared to stored representations so that the object can be categorized... Spatial attention in Treisman's sense involves the singling out of a single location on the master map of locations, so that all features at the selected location can be bound together as features of a single thing. There is no very evident reason to think that spatial attention in this sense must be a phenomenon of consciousness... This kind of spatial attention is a precondition of consciousness [e.g., seeing] of an object. The features must be bound for there to be experience of the thing. But the spatial attention itself may be a relatively low-level phenomenon (2002, p. 31. See also Campbell 1997 and Martin (1997) for an earlier discussion of the role and nature of attention in this context).

So, one basic aspect of Treisman's theory, to put it roughly, is that the features processed independently by the visual system are assigned implicit location information, that is, information about where in the environment they are located. This allows the visual system to solve the binding problem by binding together features found at the same location as features of a single object. As Campbell notes 'if, in one stream, redness is found at a particular location, and, in another stream, squareness is found at that place, then the redness and squareness would be put together, so that you have perception of a red square' (2002, p. 31).

With respect to illusory conjunctions the hypothesis is that something goes *wrong* in this binding process such that features that don't belong to objects get bound to them. The relationalist can say that if binding goes wrong in some way then one's visual experiences of the things one sees may have very peculiar characters. This is what happens in illusory conjunction cases. In such cases, one has an experience which lacks a unity-aspect pertaining to a bit of real world unity, which it might otherwise have had if the visual system was functioning properly with respect to binding. One sees the red A shaped thing, thus, on the relationalist view, the propertied particular A-which-is-red is a constituent of one's experience. It also constitutively determines the character of one's experience in a number of ways (e.g., that pertaining to the fact that what one sees looks to one like an *A* shaped thing). But in the circumstances where one's visual system's capacities for binding have broken down, the A-which-is-red is not able to determine that the conscious character of one's experience reveals the A as the *red* thing it is. It doesn't give one's experience that unity-aspect.

The important positive point for the relationalist is that when all is going *well*, and cases of seeing constitute experiences with the sorts of unity-aspects we have been considering, then *such* unity-aspects are constitutively determined by an aspect of the world which has unity as an aspect of its being—a propertied particular. Such particulars get to play this role by being present in experience, by being on the end of the non-representational relation at the heart of the relationalist proposal. It is no objection to this picture to note that these particulars play this role only in certain appropriate conditions, specific to experiences having unity-aspects—e.g., when there are no binding problems.

Since propertied particulars are aspects of the world—the yellow lemon is, obviously, an aspect of the world—this relationalist proposal is similar to McDowell's proposal. Since, as noted above, on McDowell's proposal, aspects of *the world* determine the unity-aspects of experiences. So, for the relationalist, as for McDowell, the unity in conscious experience (in cases of seeing) is just a manifestation of an aspect of how things are anyway.

Although the relationalist and McDowell agree on this, there is a substantive difference lurking here. For the relationalist, I take it,

either does think of the world as conceptual in the way that McDowell does, but then denies, contra McDowell, that perceptual contact with aspects of the world involves representation and the actualization of conceptual capacities. Or else, and this I take it is the more likely view, the relationalist simply doesn't share a conception of the world as the totality of conceptually structured facts. Thus there can be genuine perceptual contact with aspects of the world, for the relationalist, even without representation and the actualization of conceptual capacities. In line with this, the relationalist will emphasize that the propertied particular, the lemon-which-is-yellow, is *not* the *fact* that the lemon is yellow. It is not as if we are forced, in ontology or metaphysics, to choose between conceptually structured facts, and bare particulars. The lemon-which-is-yellow is neither sort of thing. It is a particular thing which has yellowness as part of its being. It is not amorphous, or bare, but it is not propositionally structured either—it is not a potential content of judgement, or belief like McDowellian facts are. It is a yellow lemon.

I began this bit of the discussion by noting that in cases of seeing, our experiences often have unity-aspects to their conscious characters. In seeing the yellow lemon for what it is, my experience has a conscious character which has a unity-aspect pertaining to the fact that the lemon is indeed yellow. I might describe this by saying “I see it *as yellow*” or “it looks to me to be yellow”, and so on. It is very tempting to suppose that this should be accounted for in terms of experience's *representing* the lemon *as being* yellow. In the McDowellian version of this view, such representation consists in the fact that the lemon is yellow being manifest in my visual experience. Representational views provide a plausible account of the unity-aspects of conscious experiences. But, I have tried to suggest, there is a coherent relationalist way of accounting for these aspects of conscious experiences too. On the relationalist account, unity in experience is just a manifestation of an aspect of how things are anyway. This is common ground with McDowell's account. But the relationalist thinks that this can be the case even without appeal to representation and actualization of representational capacities. The relevant aspect of the world is—on one version—non-conceptual. And it

gets into the experiential situation thanks to a perceiver's being related to it in a non-representational and non-conceptual way. In propitious circumstances *its* unity will be part of what determines the conscious character of the perceiver's experience.

If I am right, it seems that a relational view of seeing, as I'm understanding that, can capture some crucial aspects of our ordinary conception of seeing. Whether a relational view is ultimately plausible is, of course, a further question. One challenge for such views concerns how they can capture cases of seeing which are *illusions* (including those cases of illusory conjunction mentioned above, where there is an *illusory* unity-aspect in play). I take it that the challenge is thought to be something like this: If I see a yellow lemon, but it looks green to me, how can we account for that in the relationalist framework? In terms of the presence of the propertied particular which is the-lemon-which-is-green (as in non-illusory cases)? Surely not, for the lemon is not green. So how? But I want to bracket this and other issues that might arise for such views. For I want to discuss how such views can capture visual perception's reason giving role. (It seems to me, for what it's worth, that there are a number of plausible ways for relationalists to deal with such challenges anyway, see, e.g., Travis (2004), Brewer (2008), Martin (2010) and Kalderon (2011b)).

5.2 Reason Giving on the Relational View

I now want to suggest that with the version of the relationalist view of seeing that I've outlined in hand we can capture how seeing is reason giving. I'll first run the story on the assumption that reasons are mental states—so as to accord with what I take to be McDowell's "official" position. I'll then run the story on the assumption that reasons are objects of visual awareness. In both cases I will stick to McDowell's Sellarsian epistemological framework as much as possible.

5.2.1 Reasons as Mental States

As I argued above, on McDowell's official conception of the reasons provided by visual perception, reasons are visual perceptual states themselves. Such reasons are conclusive, indefeasible (propositional)

reasons. A McDowellian way to put the point goes like this. Suppose one sees a lemon, and in seeing the lemon one has a fact involving visual experience with the content: *that lemon is yellow*. Then there is no possibility, compatibly with a subject's being in such a state, that things are not as she would believe them to be in a belief which simply endorses the content of the perceptual state. Visual states can thus constitute *conclusive, indefeasible*, reasons to believe their corresponding contents.

A relationalist can mimic this almost completely. Suppose that I see a yellow lemon, and suppose that the character of my experience is just as described in the dominant example I used above. That is, I see the lemon for the yellow lemon it is, clear as day. The conscious character of my experience has a unity-aspect pertaining to the lemon's being yellow. This is determined by the presence of the yellow lemon itself. I am perceptually related in a non-representational way to the lemon and its yellowness—for the lemon figures as a constituent in my experience as the propertied particular it is. Thus, there is no possibility, compatibly with me being in such a state, that things are not as I would judge them to be in judging that the lemon is yellow. This is just to say that on a relational view seeings (those visual experiences which are seeings), can guarantee the truth of a range of contents concerning their objects. (Contents which aren't, on the relational view, aspects of the experience itself). Thus a relationalist can say that seeing x can itself constitute a conclusive, indefeasible, reason to believe a range of contents about x .

Which contents concerning x does my seeing x give me reason to believe? A representational theorist—whether McDowellian or otherwise—will say that in seeing x , my experience has a content concerning x . It thus gives me reasons to believe contents concerning x which correspond to the *contents* of the perceptual experience. A relationalist has to say something different. Here is a suggestion as to what they might say: which contents concerning x a seeing of x gives one reason to believe depends upon the specific character of the visual experience one has in seeing x (and so which of the features of x are present to one in one's awareness of x).

Consider again the fact discussed above that the lemon before me has atomic structure A . So, in seeing the yellow lemon on the table I see a yellow lemon-with- A on the table. (This is just a report about what I

see, not a description of the character of my experience). Being in such a state, on a relationalist construal, is not compatible with the falsity of this proposition: *that lemon has atomic structure A*. So one might think that in a sense, my visual state constitutes a conclusive propositional reason to believe that *that lemon has atomic structure A*. It is among the *reasons there are* to believe that *that lemon has atomic structure A*. But, intuitively, such an experience doesn't give me a reason to believe that the lemon has atomic structure *A*—at least, not just in virtue of the fact that I am the subject of the visual state. For the conscious character of my experience has nothing to do with the atomic structure of the lemon, the experience doesn't purport to reveal anything about *that* aspect of the lemon to me. That is to say, in seeing the lemon, on this occasion, there is nothing in how things look or appear or seem to me which corresponds to the lemon's having the atomic structure it does. For, as noted above, having atomic structure *A* is not a *visible* property the lemon has. Having the atomic structure it does is not a visible characteristic of the lemon, and so there is no question that it might be among the visible characteristics of the lemon that go into determining the character of my experience on this occasion (unlike with other properties of the lemon such as colour, shape properties, and the like).

But my seeing the yellow lemon, in the case I've been describing, does count as among my reasons for believing that the lemon *is yellow*. The conditions of the case are favourable (that is, my visual system is working, and there are no binding problems, etc). The experience I have concerns precisely the yellowness of the lemon, it reveals the lemon as yellow to me. It does this because of its nature: it is a non-representational relation to the lemon-which-is-yellow, it has a conscious character with a unity-aspect corresponding to the lemon's being yellow, determined by the presence of the propertied lemon. The experience is a modification of my consciousness. And so it is in some obvious sense there for my exploitation. If I am sufficiently conceptually *savvy* I may be able to exploit this reason I am in possession of. If, for instance, I can realize the significance of what my experience reveals to me, I may realize that the thing to think with respect to the colour of the lemon is (obviously!): *that lemon is yellow*. If I do judge in this way, then my judgement will be based on a conclusive reason I have—my seeing. In the right conditions (when, that is,

further conditions of *doxastic* warrant are satisfied—whatever they are), such judgements count as knowledge. On the Sellarsian conception of knowledge McDowell favours, they count as knowledge partly because they are based on conclusive (propositional) reasons. The relationalist can agree to this.

We can add McDowellian internalism into the mix here. As McDowell develops the Sellarsian conception of knowledge he requires that I be *able* to justify beliefs I have which count as knowledge, by citing the conclusive reasons which justify those beliefs. And this requires that those reasons are within my reflective reach. There is nothing in the epistemological story I have developed on behalf of the relationalist view which is, on the face of it, inconsistent with these conditions. In seeing the lemon, I am self-conscious and can bring my experience within my reflective reach. And if a request were to arise for me to justify my belief that that lemon is yellow, I might say: “I see the lemon” (or “I see it and it looks yellow”). This is a rational explanation of my belief, one that manifests responsiveness to reasons as such. The relationalist just has a different view to McDowell about the nature of the perceptual experience I report on in giving this response.

An aspect of something like the view I have been elaborating is arguably present in Travis (2005) in the following passage:

I face a pig, just on the other side of the railing from me. What I see (whether I realize this or not) is a pig before me. If I take in (register, am aware of) my doing *that*, then I have that – that I see a pig before me – as my reason for taking there to be a pig before me; in which case I have proof, in the strictest sense of proof, that there is one before me. To take this in – to *register* it, and not, merely, say, to surmise it – I must have a suitable ability. I must be able to tell *when* I see a pig before me (p. 313).

Travis here talks of – *that I see a pig before me* – being a reason. This is a mental fact. But if we took Travis instead to be saying that it was the mental state of seeing a pig before one that was his reason, then that would still constitute his having *proof* (a conclusive reason to believe) of the sort he describes.

So far I have tried to mimic, in relationalist terms, McDowell's official epistemological position. On the official position, McDowell regards reasons as mental states. But in section (4.6) above I suggested that there is an alternative McDowellian position, which doesn't seem to fair any worse than McDowell's official position. On this alternative the reasons provided by seeing are objective facts; those facts which, on McDowell's view, are contents of states of seeing. Is there a way to mimic this alternative McDowellian position in relationalist terms? I now want to argue that there is.

5.2.2 Reasons as Objects of Vision

On the alternative I have in mind we are to take the reasons provided by seeing to be (or at least include) *what is seen*. I see the lemon and my experience has a conscious character so as the lemon I see looks yellow to me. I am in possession of a conclusive reason to believe that the lemon is yellow. This reason is not my seeing, my experience of the lemon, it is rather the lemon itself (propertied as it is, the yellow lemon). This *entity* is among the conclusive reasons there are to believe that the lemon is yellow, in that it guarantees that the content: *the lemon is yellow* is true. It can be among the reasons *I* have to believe that the lemon is yellow because it comes within the scope of my consciousness in seeing it, consciousness the character of which is partly determined by its yellowness.

If a request were to arise for me to justify my belief that that lemon looks yellow, I might say: "I see the lemon" (or "I see it and it looks yellow"). In giving this response I am explaining why I believe that the lemon is yellow. The explanation has two aspects to it. I specify the visual route to my belief, in this sense I explain why I believe as I do. But it also has a normative aspect. For in specifying my route to my belief I specify that which brings a conclusive reason—the propertied object—into the scope of my consciousness. Seeing the yellow lemon enables the lemon to bear rationally on what I am to think, this is why saying that "I see the lemon" can be a *rational* explanation of my believing that the lemon is yellow. In giving the perceptual report I implicate the object I am aware of in addressing the epistemic credentials of my belief.

I have, in seeing the lemon, access to what it is that (propositionally)

warrants my belief that the lemon is yellow. My reason is, in this sense, accessible to me. Perhaps *in a sense* it is also reflectively accessible to me. For when I reflect upon my experience there is something right to the idea that my reflection reaches “all the way out” to the world—to yellow lemon. This is especially so if the experience I have when I see the lemon fundamentally consists in a relation to the lemon, propertied as it is. Such objects are among my reasons by being constituents of perceptual consciousness, reflection on perceptual consciousness gives one a form of reflective access to such reasons. In *that* sense we can endorse some sort of reflective accessibility requirement on knowledge if we follow through with the current relationalist line of thought.

There are relationalists in the literature who have begun to develop something like the epistemological line of thought I am currently sketching. For instance Brewer (2011) expresses his view as follows

[P]erceptual experience consists most fundamentally in conscious acquaintance, from a given point of view, in a particular sensory modality, and in specific circumstances of perception, with mind-independent physical objects themselves. These very objects constitute the reasons for the correctness of the application of certain empirical concepts in judgement. Thus, when a person is visually presented with a given mind-independent physical object, *o*, that is *F*, from a relatively standard point of view and in relatively standard conditions, she is consciously acquainted with the very reason for applying the concept ‘*F*’; and, given her registration of its visually relevant similarities with the paradigms involved in her grasp of that concept [that is, given that *o*, in a sense, looks *F* to *S*], she recognizes *o* as just such a reason. Thus, *o* is the evident reason for her application of ‘*F*’ in judgement given her perceptual acquaintance with *o* and grasp of the concept of ‘*F*’ [which isn’t, on Brewer’s view, required for the acquaintance] (p. 156).

Another relationalist who offers an account of the epistemology of visual perception in terms of reasons conceived of as the objects of perception

is Kalderon (2011a). He outlines the conception of reasons he favours in the following way:

[L]et me dogmatically assert my adherence to a radically externalist conception of reasons...The conception is *externalist* in that, according to it, reasons need not be propositional attitudes or any other psychological state of a subject. External reasons may not be propositional attitudes, but, for all that has been said, they may yet have a propositional structure. Suppose reasons are facts. Facts are not psychological states of a subject—not even facts about the psychological states of a subject count. Nevertheless, facts have the structure of true propositions that represent them (trivially, if facts are true propositions) (p. 227).

So the externalism Kalderon speaks of here doesn't rule out the alternative McDowellian view mentioned above which embeds a "non-mental fact conception" of the reasons provided by perception. For such facts are judgement-shaped, propositional. But, Kalderon continues

What makes the present conception *radically* externalist is that, according to it, nonpsychological reasons need not have a propositional structure (p. 227)

Kalderon's radical externalism about reasons makes room for the entities we encounter in visual perception to be among our reasons. Kalderon develops the point with respect to property instances—which are, on his view, as noted above, among the entities we see. So, he says:

On this conception, the yellowish red of the tomato is a reason for thinking that the tomato is not quite ripe. Note well, it is the yellowish red of the tomato, and not my seeing that the tomato is yellowish red, nor my believing that the tomato is yellowish red, which is a reason. The yellowish red of the tomato lacks a propositional structure—it is a particular, a property instance. It is spatially distant from me—the yellowish red inheres in the opaque surface of the tomato a meter away and inherits its location from the surface in which

it inheres. It is an aspect of how things are independently of me. The yellowish red of the tomato is a reason that warrants judging that the tomato is yellowish red. Indeed, in this instance, there could be no better reason—the yellowish red of the tomato warrants judging that the tomato is red because the former makes true the latter. Of course, not all reasons are of this form. The yellowish red of the tomato is also a reason, in certain circumstances, for thinking that the tomato is unripe, but the yellowish red of the tomato does not make it true that the tomato is unripe; at best it is a sign or symptom of the fruit's relative maturity.. Of course, in order for the yellowish red of the tomato to rationally bear on what I am to think, it must be cognitively accessible. But that is what perception does for me—perception makes me aware of what reasons there are. Perception is thus a mode of reasonableness (p. 227).

I want to focus on just the link between the yellowish red of the tomato and the belief that the tomato is red. (The other case Kalderon mentions here, where the belief is that the tomato is unripe, falls outside the scope of the restriction to basic cases I imposed on the discussion here in the Introduction to the previous Chapter).

Kalderon thinks that the yellowish red of the tomato counts as the best sort of reason for believing that the tomato is yellowish red—it is a conclusive reason. To that extent, this is in line with something I mentioned above when I noted that a yellow lemon is a conclusive reason to believe that that lemon is yellow, for it guarantees that the content, *that lemon is yellow*, is true. But Kalderon takes on an additional commitment, for he notes that the yellowish red of the tomato *makes true* the content: *the tomato is red*. He utilizes this point in explaining how visual perception can confer epistemic entitlement:

Vision confers... epistemic entitlement given the alethic connection between the particular that is the object of visual awareness and the proposition potentially known. Awareness of a sensible truthmaker of a proposition affords the subject with a reason that is in this way akin to proof—it is logically

impossible for the particular to exist and the proposition to be false (p. 228).

Kalderon is appealing here, then, to the idea that some of the objects of visual awareness, such as the yellowish red of the tomato, can count as conclusive reasons *because they are truthmakers* for associated contents (see also, Brewer (2011), Chapter 6, and especially Johnston (2006) on the notion of sensible truthmakers, for general discussion on truthmakers see Armstrong (2004), Rodriguez-Pereyra (2006), and the discussions in Beebe and Dodd (2005)).

But what does Kalderon's commitment to truthmaker metaphysics amount to? Kalderon endorses the following necessary condition on x being a truthmaker, which, he states, constitutes endorsement of a version of truthmaker necessitarianism:

If a particular, x —be it an object, event, or property instance—is a truth maker for a proposition, p , then it is necessary that if x exists, then p is true (p. 226).

Let's return to the case of the yellow lemon. The propertied lemon is, I said, a conclusive reason to believe that the lemon is yellow. We can, if we want, understand this in Kalderon's truthmaker way. The yellow lemon, *understood as a propertied particular*, is something which already includes yellowness as an aspect of its being. So necessarily, if it, the lemon—which-is-yellow, exists, the content—*that lemon is yellow*—is true. Moreover, this is in line with Kalderon's "radical externalism" about reasons, since, as noted above, the yellow lemon is not a fact, or propositionally shaped. It is a yellow lemon, it is not *the lemon is yellow*.

One question here, though, is whether the relationalist needs to commit to truthmaker metaphysics in order to understand how the particulars which are the objects of visual awareness can be conclusive reasons? If not, then it is perhaps best not to commit. It is not, after all, as if truthmaker metaphysics is uncontroversial. (See, for instance, the very helpful discussion in MacBride (2005)). But one thing to note here is that in Kalderon's case the endorsement of truthmaker metaphysics is fairly minimal. For instance, he doesn't endorse so-called "truthmaker maximalism" which claims that all true propositions have truthmakers. (One

of the issues for this view concerns negative truths, e.g., true negative existential claims such as that there are no chimeras. Is there a plausible account of the truthmakers for such claims? Many have thought not. See e.g., Simons (2005), and the discussions of Lewis on this issue in MacBride (2005)).

However, it is not entirely obvious that we need to commit even to truthmaker necessitarianism in order to make sense of how something can be a conclusive reason. We have an ordinary, albeit imprecise, idea about claims being true *because* of things in the world, or how things are, and so on (in some constitutive and non-causal sense). Perhaps this will do for understanding how something can be a conclusive reason? It is not obvious that this involves a commitment to even a minimal truthmaker metaphysics. What is relevant, in the case we have been discussing, is that the yellow lemon guarantees the truth of the relevant content *in the actual world*. All that matters for that is that the yellow lemon grounds the truth of the content: the lemon is yellow. All that matters is that actually the content is true because of the yellow lemon. The yellow lemon may well be such that necessarily if it exists then the relevant content is true. But is that *explanatory* of why it counts as a conclusive reason? Is that explanatory of why it grounds the truth of the content in the actual world? That is just not obvious. It might be, then, that appeal to truthmakers in this context is irrelevant to capturing the required point that objects of awareness can be conclusive reasons. I think this is an issue worthy of further consideration, but I will leave it open here.

I have outlined two ways in which a relationalist view of seeing might be used in an account of how seeing has a reason giving role. These two ways make use of McDowell's epistemological assumptions. The two ways correspond to the two versions of McDowell's conception of how seeing is reason giving. These relationalist accounts are accounts on which seeing is nonconceptual. Whether they are true accounts is an issue we haven't considered, but that aside, the relevant point is that they at least seem to make sense of visual perception's reason giving role. That is *prima facie* reason to be suspicious of McDowell's claim that we can make sense of the reason giving role of seeing only if we take seeing to be conceptual. What might McDowell say by way of undermining the

idea that these relationalist views do make sense of the reason giving role of seeing?

5.3 The Myth of the Given?

Perhaps visual perception, on the relationalist views, is able to offer only ‘exculpations where we wanted justifications’ (McDowell (1994), p. 8)? Is the significance of visual perception, on a relationalist view, limited to merely *causing* beliefs, and perhaps ensuring that some of them are blamelessly held? Absolutely not. It should be clear that this charge doesn’t fit visual perception on the relationalist views I’ve just outlined. As I made clear in my descriptions, experiences (seeings), on either of the views, give one propositional reasons, which one can be rationally responsive to in judging (so such reasons can contribute towards doxastic and personal warrant too). We have justifications here, not exculpations.

McDowell also says: ‘we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgement is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities’ (p. 7). This passage deserves some scrutiny, it is not even clear what McDowell is saying here. Here are some considerations against what McDowell might be suggesting .

(1) Suppose that McDowell is talking about conceptual contents. And the thought is that only relations between conceptual contents can result in warranted judgement. But then what is warranted judgement? If it is a judgement which is merely *propositionally* warranted, then what McDowell says here is not obviously correct. There is some propositional warrant to believe that Jones committed the murder. What does this consist in? Jone’s fingerprints on the murder weapon. But Jone’s fingerprints, obviously, are not conceptual contents. If we think of propositional warrant which is conferred by *reasons*, then again all sorts of (non-conceptual) things can count as reasons: objects, events, other particulars, mental states, and so on. I for one, as with some of the authors quoted above, *can* make sense of propositional reasons which are not conceptual contents.

(2) But—staying with the ‘conceptual contents’ interpreta-

tion—suppose McDowell means by ‘warranted judgement’ doxastic warrant. The thought might be that one can only acquire a warrant for *believing* a content through the involvement of some conceptual content (e.g., as the reason for which one judges). But again, as the discussion above makes clear, it is intelligible to deny this. My perceptual experience is not, even by McDowell’s lights, a conceptual content, *it* is not a structure composed of contents (that doesn’t make sense). But it can be a reason. It can be a reason which I have reflective access to, and something I am rationally responsive to in judging. It can thus contribute to my being warranted in believing as I do. (And similarly if we take reasons as what is experienced, rather than experiences).

(3) Suppose instead that McDowell is talking about conceptual mental states (mental states which involve conceptual contents, and thus the exercise or actualization of conceptual capacities pertaining to the concepts involved in those contents). The thought then might be that we cannot understand how a judgement can be warranted except in terms of the relation it bears to some other conceptual mental state. But for the reasons already given this doesn’t appear to be correct. The point about propositional warrant made above in (1) applies here too. Propositional warrant can be conferred by many things, not just conceptual mental states. And if the point is supposed to apply to doxastic warrant, then again the discussion of the relational views above should at least make it *intelligible* how one can be warranted in judging a certain content on the basis of non-conceptual experience, or a non-conceptual bit of objective reality.

It strikes me then that on multiple interpretations there doesn’t seem to be much by way of *intuitive* force in the suggestion of McDowell’s we have been considering.

Another of McDowell’s arguments pertains to what is required for a bit of empirical thinking to count as rational. Peacocke (2001, p. 255) describes the argument in the following way, paraphrasing passages from McDowell (1994), pp. 52–53:

rational thinking involves the possibility of scrutinizing the relations between experience and judgment. Nothing is outside the limits of rational self-scrutiny (*op. cit.*, p. 52), even if, after scrutinizing the case in question, we decide to endorse

it. McDowell's view is that it is hard to see how this scrutiny would be possible unless experience has only conceptual content (*op. cit.*, pp. 52-53).

The idea then is that a judgement based on experience (a bit of empirical thinking) is rational only if it is possible to rationally scrutinize the relations between experience and judgement. But that requires, McDowell thinks, that experience has conceptual content. Peacocke complains that that 'last step seems to me a nonsequitur' (p. 255). I agree. Peacocke makes the point from the perspective of his non-conceptualist representational approach to experience, but let me make the point from the perspective of the relational view.

Suppose we agree with the 'possibility of rational self-scrutiny' requirement, it is completely unobvious why that couldn't be satisfied on either of the relational approaches discussed above. Here are some trains of thought that would manifest rational self-scrutiny on a reasonable understanding of that: I have taken what I believe to be a hallucinogenic drug. I then have an experience as of a yellow lemon (in fact, I see a the lemon for what it is). I think to myself: "Should I take this lemon to be yellow? Should I take this to be a lemon? Should I take it that there is a lemon there?" I realize that I am finding it hard *not* to judge that there is a lemon there, my experience is compelling. But I try to suspend judgement. And so on... I can engage in such active self-critical thinking about my experience, and how it bears on potential judgements I might make. Why would this require us to suppose that experience thus can't be understood as the relationalists understand it, and must instead be understood to have conceptual content? That seems to be an unwarranted leap.

In engaging in the rational self-scrutiny I *conceptualize* my experience, I describe, in thought at least, the character of my experience using concepts I possess. And this enables rational self-scrutiny. But that is intelligibly conceived as an interpretation of my experience. Again if I think, in a normal case, "that looks yellow to me, and it looks as if it is a lemon, so it must be a yellow lemon", I am giving expression to how I *take* the character of my experience, and then advancing to how my experience should thus bear on what to think. This is perfectly consistent with ex-

perience being non-conceptual in the relationalist's sense (or Peacocke's sense; note that the reply I have given here echoes Peacocke's own reply).

Finally, McDowell (1994) makes a further complaint against Peacocke, which we might generalize as follows

In the reflective tradition we belong to, there is a time honoured connection between reason and discourse... [Nonconceptual views of experience] cannot respect this connection. [Such views have] to sever the tie between reasons for which a subject thinks as she does and reason she can give for thinking that way. Reasons that the subject can give, in so far as they are articulable, must be within the space of concepts (p. 165).

But in the discussion of relational views above we granted this requirement and saw how it could be satisfied. In manifesting my ability to articulate my reason for believing that the lemon is yellow I can offer: "I see the lemon, and it looks yellow to me". We can understand this assertion as giving my reason in the form of the experience, or the object of experience. Insofar as I report an experience here in giving my reason, it is perfectly intelligible to suppose that it is nonconceptual, as the relationalist suggests.

McDowell claims that the idea of the Given is 'the idea that the space of reasons... extends more widely than the conceptual sphere' (p. 7). In that case, given what we've observed, it is not at all obvious that the Given is a Myth (Travis (2007)).

McDowell might legitimately claim that unless experience presents a thing as having a feature, the experience cannot warrant a perceptually based judgement in which a subject takes the thing in question to have the feature in question. Roughly, the idea might be that the structure of one's judgement is that the thing in question has the feature in question, and a judgement structured as such can be warranted by a perception only if there is a corresponding 'togetherness' of thing and feature in perception itself. This, McDowell will insist, requires that a seeing in which *a* is presented as being *F* is conceptual. In a case in which one is not misled, the seeing must involve the worldly, but conceptually

composed, fact that *a* is *F*. Thus experience must involve an actualization of conceptual capacities pertaining to the elements of that content. The corresponding judgement is just an endorsing of that very content. Thus, the very ‘togetherness’ between thing and feature present in judgement is present too in perception. If one’s theory of perception doesn’t allow for this, then one has fallen prey to the Myth of the Given.

For all I’ve said here the relationalist can accept that a judgement that *a* is *F* could not be perceptually warranted unless one’s experience somehow involved a corresponding ‘togetherness’ of *a* and *F*. The relationalist might accept that for such a judgement to be warranted the experience must *in some sense* present *a* as *F*. The controversial issues are what that amounts to? And what it *must* amount to if experience is to warranting? The relationalist will insist that it doesn’t amount to experience being conceptual. And, the relationalist will add, this doesn’t prevent experience from being reason giving.

What I said above in my attempt to suggest how a relationalist can account for the unity-aspects of experience is relevant here. A relationalist certainly doesn’t have to think of experience as some strange unstructured entity. Experience is not, on a relationalist view, an amorphous lump, sitting in consciousness, which somehow warrants judgement. In seeing the lemon my experience has a certain conscious character, which has a unity-aspect corresponding to the lemon’s being yellow. In that sense my experience presents or reveals the lemon as yellow to me. There is, in the unity-aspect of the conscious character of my experience, a ‘togetherness’ of thing and feature. It is not predicational, or conceptual, or propositionally shaped. It is constituted by the presence of the *yellow lemon*—a propertied particular. The unity-aspect of my experience is constituted by an element of worldly ‘togetherness’ which grounds a corresponding predication or judgement. The relationalist will insist that the experience is thus perfectly suited, in its nature, character, and structure, to warrant a judgement with a corresponding (but not identical) ‘togetherness’ of thing and feature.

McDowell might push back with the idea that the world is the totality of conceptually structured facts. So, he might add, it is just not intelligible that some element of worldly ‘togetherness’ be part of what constitutes an aspect of the character of an experience without

experience involving the actualization of conceptual capacities (and so, without experience being a form of representation). Perhaps, *if* the world is the totality of conceptually structured facts. But what compels the relationalist to accept *that*?

What is not obvious, I have tried to suggest, is that the relationalist is falling prey to some problematic Myth by insisting that perceptual experience is reason giving but not conceptual.

5.4 Conclusion

In the previous section I tried to suggest that relationalist views of seeing can give intelligible accounts of visual perception's reason giving role. Insofar as these accounts are accounts on which seeing is *not conceptual*, this discussion undermines McDowell's idea that experience has a reason giving role only if it is conceptual. I also attempted to rebut some of the criticisms McDowell might direct towards this attempted undermining of his suggestion. To be clear, I *haven't* argued that seeing is not conceptual. I find McDowell's views of seeing (early and later), taken in themselves, to be somewhat compelling (though I am not sure whether to endorse them). I also *haven't* argued that insofar as visual perception has a reason giving role it must be understood in *relationalist* terms—I don't believe that this is true, even if a relationalist view of seeing is correct (and I don't know whether some such view is correct).

How does this discussion bear on answering the question of explanation? The question of explanation concerns what makes it the case that visual perception is a means of knowing in the way that we ordinarily suppose it is? The answer to the question of explanation we have been discussing is what I've been calling a Reasons Answer. I've been trying to argue that a Reasons Answer gives us a plausible partial answer to the question of explanation. No claim is made here that it is the best such answer, or problem free—though I have addressed some potential problems along the way.

I take a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation to be a good answer given two important qualifications. First, I have only argued that the answer is plausible if we restrict our attention to just mature hu-

man knowledge, and the knowledge grounding seeing mature humans enjoy—this is a restriction we picked up in discussing McDowell. Now an interesting question is what happens when we lift this restriction? Do we have to offer a completely separate account? If so, would it be problematic to have distinct accounts for such (seemingly) similar phenomena—animal seeing and knowing, and human seeing and knowing? (McDowell thinks not, Burge disagrees. But who is right?) Can we extend or develop the *reason giving* account to the case of animal seeing and knowing, so as we have something more like a unified account? These are all questions I leave open here, but aim to pursue in future work.

Second, I haven't been trying to explain how visual perception is a means of knowing *any* visually perceptually knowable content, just those contents in a restricted range. In the Introduction to the previous Chapter I noted that I would only be interested in cases where (i) the knowledge content p concerns the object of visual perception x , and (ii) p is a proposition which represents x as F where F is a feature which we intuitively take to be a visible feature (in the phenomenological sense discussed in Chapter 1 above). Such features, I noted, include being red, being cubic in shape, having such-and-such a texture. I have thus been considering cases such as where one knows that the lemon is *yellow* on the basis of seeing it. But I have bracketed cases such as cases where one knows that one's neighbour is at home because they can see their neighbour's car in the driveway. Another interesting question concerns what happens when we lift this restriction? Can we extend the reasons account to the bracketed cases? If so how, and what developments would we need? There is also an interesting and relevant philosophy of perception question lurking here: how do we distinguish features which are visible (in the phenomenological sense) from features which are not? I have throughout this thesis relied on intuition in sorting cases here, but it would be good to have an account. These are, again, questions I aim to pursue in future work.

Now, a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation involves three components:

- (1) Knowledge is constitutively subject to a reasons condition.
- (2) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition

on knowledge is satisfied.

- (3) Visual perception can make it the case that the reasons condition on knowledge is satisfied because of its nature.

In the previous Chapter I tried to support (1) and (2). To address (3) we looked at different theories of seeing, which give us different specifications of how it is of the nature of visual perception that it is reason giving. We looked at McDowellian views, and relationalist views (and there are other views we haven't looked at here). Taking this approach to (3) is in line with the idea that to support (3) we must look at theories of visual perception. This seems reasonable enough since such theories tell us what the nature of such perception is, or give accounts of constitutive aspects of visual perception. This is what above I called the *Theory Strategy* for motivating (3).

If we accept the Theory Strategy it seems that to come to a conclusion (in which we put forward a Reasons Answer), we will have to choose between these theories, or advance another theory, so as we can settle on a specific version of a Reasons Answer.

But I want to end by articulating—sketching, really—the idea that we can answer the question of explanation, in at least a relatively satisfactory way, with a Reasons Answer, without appeal to any of the theories of perception we have considered here. We can reject the Theory Strategy, and in suggesting that (3) is correct draw on features that are constitutive of seeing, *independently* of any particular theoretical account of those features. The above discussion of theories of seeing helps us to appreciate what those constitutive features might be: the relationality of seeing, and the fact that seeing x is a mode of conscious awareness in which one has a visual experience in which x looks or seems or appears some way to one. Call these the Agreed Features.

Why does the discussion above help us to bring *these* features into view? Because I presented the theories above as theories *of* these features, and the way the theories accounted for the reason giving role of seeing came out in the details of how they accounted for those features. If we step back, we can ask: is the explanatory power of the Reasons Answers which embed these theories a matter of the *accounts* they give of

the constitutive features of seeing, or simply *the constitutive features* (the Agreed Features)?

It strikes me that it is not at all obvious that we need to say what the nature of seeing x is, beyond acknowledging the Agreed Features, in order to account for the reason giving role of seeing x . Suppose that reasons are mental states, and the reasons given by seeing x are states of seeing x . Here's an account (restricting attention to purely veridical cases): in a given case, my seeing a lemon is itself a reason to believe a range of contents about the lemon. Which contents? Those which correspond to the character of my awareness of the lemon. Suppose I am aware of the lemon as yellow. Thus, my state of seeing, involving as it does a veridical awareness of the lemon as yellow, is something which *guarantees* that the lemon is yellow. It thus constitutes a conclusive reason for me. Part of why the state can guarantee the relevant truth is because the relevant object must exist if the state does, as it is a relational state.

This explanation makes essential reference to the Agreed Features of seeing—the relationality and conscious awareness features. But there is no account of those features involved in what I've said here. What do we *gain*, if we add that the state is a non-composite basic state, which is a non-representational relation, and so on and so on. What do we *gain* if we add that the state is conceptual, fact involving, and so on and so on? What we might gain is decent metaphysics of perception. But what do we gain *by way of explanatory power in answering the question of explanation?*

It is not obvious to me that there are gains or losses here. The discussion of theories of seeing I have engaged in allows us to see that there is a general formulation of the idea that visual perception is reason giving, in terms of the Agreed Features, which is not hostage to the details of specific theories of seeing. We might tentatively suggest, then, that we *can* give a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation like this: because of the Agreed Features, that is, because visual perception is relational and a mode of conscious awareness, it ensures the satisfaction of some constitutive feature on (mature human) knowledge—the reasons condition. That is part of why seeing an entity can be an element of that in virtue of which one *knows*, as opposed to merely believes, some content concerning that entity which attributes a visible characteristic to that entity. This embodies a rejection of the Theory Strategy. Unless there is some

compelling reason to accept that strategy, or striking epistemological features of different metaphysical theories of seeing which I've missed, it is an answer we should feel comfortable accepting, and it is the answer I recommend.

Conclusion

In Part I of this thesis I attempted to characterize how we ordinarily think of visual perception and its epistemic significance. In Chapter 1 I outlined our ordinary understanding of what visual perception is. In Chapter 2 I argued that we can understand the content of our ordinary understanding of the way in which visual perception is a means of knowing in terms of an *explanatory characterization*: visual perception is capable of explaining knowledge of a restricted range of propositions (how some *S* knows some *p* in that range) in an epistemically satisfactory way. In Chapter 3 I argued that this is a plausible way of understanding our *ordinary* conception of visual perception's epistemic significance.

In Part II of this thesis, I have worked with the assumption that visual perception *is* as we ordinarily conceive of it to be. (I have at no point attempted to defend this assumption). I addressed the *question of explanation*: what makes it the case that visual perception is a means of knowing? I tried to answer the question in terms of what it is about the nature of visual perception, and the nature of knowledge (insofar as it is epistemic), which is such that visual perception is a means of knowing. The idea I have considered, which I introduced in Chapter 4, is that visual perception is a means of knowing in that it has a reason giving role. I tried to show how we can take McDowell's work on seeing to give us just such an answer—what I called a Reason's Answer. The discussion of McDowell also helped us to see how a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation is plausible (given some restrictions and qualifications which I summarized in the conclusion of Chapter 5).

In Chapter 5 I outlined a relationalist view of seeing, in opposition to McDowell's view. I argued that a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation could also be given on such a view of seeing. Given that on the relationalist view I considered, seeing is not conceptual, I used this

point to undermine McDowell's claim that seeing can be reason giving only if it is conceptual.

I concluded, tentatively, by suggesting that we don't need to endorse a specific theory of seeing in order to give a satisfactory Reasons Answer to the question of explanation. There is a formulation of how we think of perception as reason giving (in terms of some of the features we ordinarily take to be constitutive of seeing), which is not hostage to the details of specific theories of seeing, but which sustain a Reasons Answer to the question of explanation of the form I've been interested in.

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