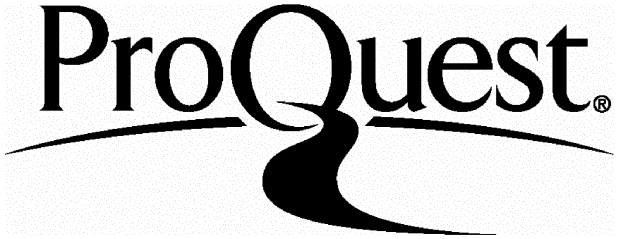
CIARA NIAMH LIVIA CORISH FAIRLEY

THE APPEARANCE OF FOUNDATIONS

M.Phil. Thesis 2003



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Mike Martin for his philosophical guidance and for his invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this thesis. Thanks also to Paul Snowdon and Quassim Cassam for comments. This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to defend a naïve account of perceptual warrant. According to the naïve account, our perceptual experiences directly warrant our perceptual beliefs.

In chapter 1, I outline the naïve view and present that view with some problems. In chapter 2, I contrast the naïve view with a traditional form of foundationalism which I call appearance foundationalism. According to this view, appearance beliefs are privileged vis-à-vis perceptual beliefs. The appearance foundationalist rejects the naïve view on the grounds that it fails to satisy the epistemological demands set out in chapter 1. In the rest of chapter 2, I explain why appearance beliefs satisfy those demands, and why perceptual beliefs are regarded as problematic. In chapter 3, I examine the idea that our perceptual beliefs cannot be directly warranted by experience because they are defeasible. I develop two responses to this problem. Given the assumptions which appearance foundationalism accepts, it is right to reject the naïve account. I conclude, however, that the case for these assumptions is weaker than the intuitive case for the naïve account.

Chapter 1: A Naïve Account of Perceptual Warrant

1. A Common Sense Thought

Prior to any philosophical reflection we all take it that perception, or the use of our senses, is one way of gaining knowledge about the world around us, and according to common-sense at least this is so in a relatively straightforward sense. Intuitively, we take it that we can acquire knowledge about how things are in the world around us *simply* by perceiving the world to be a certain way, that is, by seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, or smelling it to be a certain way. Indeed, from the perspective of common sense, it might seem hard to exaggerate quite how much of our knowledge of the world we do gain in such, seemingly mundane, ways. We assume that, for instance, I can come to know that there's a pig in front of me simply by seeing that there's a pig in front of me. Or again, that I can count as knowing that there's a fire engine outside just on the basis of hearing that there's a fire engine outside, and similarly for the other senses. Moreover, if challenged with questions like 'But *how* do you know that that's a pig?' or '*How* do you can that that's a fire engine?', our natural response is to say such things as 'Well, I can see that that's a pig' or 'Because I can hear that it's a fire engine'. In other words, we give *justifications* or *grounds* for our claims to know in terms of our being able to perceive that things are thus and so. So, as ordinary folk, we take it both that we do know things about the objects in the world which we perceive and, moreover, that we know these things *because* we perceive them to be so.

2. The Naïve Account

Is it possible to give a philosophical account of perceptual knowledge that tracks what we are inclined to think as ordinary folk? I am going to argue that it is. I am going to call such an account 'the naïve account'. The rest of this thesis will be concerned to say what, if anything,

is wrong with that account. The point of the naïve account isn't to convince anyone who is already genuinely puzzled by the thought that we began with. Rather it simply aims to spell out in more explicitly theoretical terms the basic intuition that we began with, namely the intuition that we can gain *knowledge* about the world around us *simply* by perceiving it to be a certain way. To that extent, it is a philosophical account, but a naïve one, and that, I am going to take it, is precisely the source of its appeal.

To use any of the five senses is to perceive. When we perceive the world around us there are both the objects in the world that we perceive (i.e. pigs and fire engines), and our perceivings of them (i.e. our seeings and hearings). Perceiving an object thus involves having what we might call 'a perceptual experience', and when one has such an experience the object one is perceiving *appears* to one as being some way. Perceptual experiences are conscious psychological states of the subject, which as such have a certain conscious, or what be called phenomenological, character. I am going to call such psychological states, *appearance states*. For instance, when one sees an object one has a *visual* experience of an object, in which the object one is perceiving looks to one to be some way; and similarly for the other senses. After all, objects can not only look to one to be some way, they can also sound and feel and taste and smell to be certain ways to one. Furthermore, as others have pointed out,[1] and as our very examples seem to highlight, it's difficult to do justice to what our experiences are like (i.e. their conscious character), without describing them in terms appropriate to the physical world and the objects in the world that we ordinarily or naively take ourselves to be perceiving. From the inside, one might say, our experiences seem to be simply presentations of how things are in the world around us.

[1] For a classic statement of this view, see Strawson 1988.

What is the connection between our being in such psychological states, for example, the world's looking to us to be a certain way, and our thereby coming to know something about how the world is? Perceiving the world to be a certain way needn't amount to believing that the world is so[2]. For one thing, we don't always pay much attention to all the different ways that the world may appear to us as being, at any given time. So, to the extent that knowledge involves belief, perceiving the world to be a certain way needn't amount to knowing that the world is a certain way. Nevertheless, according to the naïve account the connection is still relatively straightforward. According to the naïve account, our perceptual experiences do not merely cause us to have certain beliefs about the world. Rather, our perceptual experiences themselves directly ground, or support, or *warrant* our beliefs about how things are in the world around us. In other words, according to the naïve account, our simply being in such psychological states (i.e. our having a perceptual experience in which the world appears to us as being a certain way), itself puts us in a position to form epistemically favourable beliefs about how the world is; and where these belief are true[3] we can thereby gain knowledge of how the world around us is. If we call the beliefs that we form about the world around us as a result of being in such psychological states 'perceptual beliefs', then according to the naïve view our perceptual beliefs are directly warranted by our perceptual experiences. According to the naive view then, perception is a source or potential source of knowledge about how the world around us is, because it is a source of *warrant* for certain of our beliefs about the world around us, and where these beliefs are true we are thereby in a position to gain knowledge of the world.

What does it mean to say that our perceptual experiences 'directly' warrant our perceptual beliefs? The thought here is that the warrant that our perceptual experiences provide for our

[2] For a more detailed discussion of some of these issues, see Martin 1993 and 1998.

perceptual beliefs is non-inferential. That is to say, it does not consist in our possession of some kind of argument. To put it another way, our perceptual experiences do not justify us in certain beliefs which, in conjunction with various other things we may be justified in believing, we must employ to *infer* a belief about how the world is. This is not to claim, of course, that our perceptual experiences exhaust the warrant for our perceptual beliefs. Some perceptual beliefs may also depend for their warrant, at least in part, on other factors[4]. Moreover, it is not to deny that our perceptual experiences may also warrant beliefs about what our experiences themselves are like, or beliefs about how one is appeared to. The point is, rather, that, in some cases at least, our beliefs about how things are in the world are also justified simply on the basis of how one's experience presents things as being.

To sum up, the naïve account consists of the following three elements:

(a) When one perceives the world to be a certain way, one is in a certain psychological state, namely an appearance state, in which the world appears to one as being that way.

(b) Appearance states play a grounding, or warranting role with respect to our beliefs.

(c) The beliefs that are directly warranted by one's being in such appearance states are, or at least include, perceptual beliefs, that is, beliefs about how things are in the external world around one.

3. The Argument from Error

Despite its intuitive appeal the naïve account is opposed to what many philosophers have traditionally wanted to say about how it is that we gain knowledge about the world through the use of our senses. Not surprisingly, therefore, the naïve view is open to a range of philosophical challenges. The particular challenge which I want to focus on is one which has

[3] Or perhaps better, one when is having a veridical perception.

its origins in what I will call the 'argument from error'. Unlike the so-called 'argument from illusion', which could be interpreted as questioning the naïve account's conception of experience, the argument from error challenges the claim that perceptual experience, as conceived of by the naïve view, can act as a ground for perceptual beliefs. It is thus a distinctively epistemological challenge rather than one which originates in considerations in the philosophy of perception.

What then is the argument from error and how does it help motivate the rejection of the naïve account? Recall then that according to the naïve account one's perceptual experiences themselves directly warrant one's perceptual beliefs. And indeed, according to the naïve account, when such a belief is true, one thereby knows, or is at least in a position to know, something about how things are in the external world around one. The argument from error is very simple and it attempts to show that one's perceptual beliefs can never, contra the naïve account, have such a non-inferential status. In other words, according to the argument from error, one's perceptual beliefs are never directly warranted by one's perceptual experiences.

The argument from error starts off by pointing out that when one believes the world to be a certain way because of how one's perceptual experience presents the world as being, one sometimes makes mistakes[5]. When one makes such mistakes, one's belief is false and one doesn't thereby know anything about how the external world is. According to the argument from error, what this shows is that in order to come to know how things are in the world

[4] Perhaps in some cases one's experience only plays a marginal role, while in other cases it plays a more substantial role. For a discussion of some of these issues see, Peacocke 1983, especially Ch. 4.

[5] I'm abstracting from the point that the argument from error is often taken to apply more generally, and hence to motivate a more far reaching kind of scepticism. I am only concerned with that argument to the extent that it purports to create a problem for the naïve view. That involves looking at it's application to perceptual beliefs. See Dancy 1985.

around one on the basis of how one's experience presents the world as being, one also needs a reason to believe that one is not in the kind of case in which one would make a mistake, and hence would fail to know. So one's perceptual beliefs never have the non-inferential status claimed for them by the naïve account. According to the argument from error, one's perceptual experiences never directly justify one's perceptual beliefs, given that one also needs a reason to believe that one is not in the kind of case in which one would make mistakes.

Stated in this brief form, the argument from error seems to raise various questions, and we'll be exploring some of these in the next two chapters. For instance, one question might be whether, even if one agrees that one needs a reason to believe that one is not in a case in which one has made a mistake and hence fails to know, that would suffice to show that one's justification for one's perceptual beliefs is always inferential in character. For the time being, however, I want to just set such difficulties aside, and simply try and spell out that argument in a bit more detail. That argument, if successful, certainly seems to pose some kind of threat to the naive view, and we'll be in a better position to see why that is so, if we can get clearer about how the argument is meant to work .

As we've just seen the argument starts off by pointing out that when we form beliefs about how the world around us is on the basis of how we experience the world to be, we sometimes make mistakes. The reason why we sometimes make mistakes is, of course, because our perceptual experiences don't always present the world as being the way it really is, as cases of illusion and hallucination seem to make clear. Moreover, such cases can seem from the subject's perspective to be indistinguishable from cases of veridical perception, where we do perceive the world as being the way it really is. In cases of illusion the world, or rather the

objects in it which we perceive, can appear to us as being other than they really are. For instance, in normal lighting the mug in front of me looks white. But under certain abnormal lighting conditions the very same mug can look pink to me. In such a case, I seem to experience the world as being a certain way - so I have a visual experience as of a pink mug in front of me - but the way my experience presents the world to me as being is at odds with how things really are. Given that this is so, if I were to believe in such a case that 'that's a pink mug in front of me' on the basis of how my experience presents the world as being, then my belief about the mug would be mistaken.

There are also cases of hallucination where my senses seem to present things as being a certain way, even though there is no object in the world that I can correctly be claimed to be perceiving at all. Things just look or sound or feel or taste or smell to me to be a certain way. In other words, in cases of hallucination, I'm not even misperceiving some object (i.e. perceiving it as other than it really is). There's no object in the world that I am perceiving at all. For instance, if I've taken hallucinogenic drugs it might look to me as if there's a kangaroo in front of me, even if there's nothing in front of me at all. In such a case, if I were to believe that 'that's a kangaroo in front of me' on the basis of how my visual experience presents things as being, then my belief would be mistaken.

In cases of illusion and hallucination, then, if I were to believe the world to be the way my experience or senses present it as being to me, then my belief would be mistaken or in error. Indeed in these cases my belief would, of course, be false. Clearly in such cases I don't thereby gain any knowledge of how the world around me is.

It's worth pointing out that one might be puzzled at this stage by the thought that the argument from error could any pose any kind of threat to the naïve account at all on the basis of such facts. After all, the fact that there are cases of illusion and hallucination is surely as 'naïve' a truth as anything that I have so far represented as belonging to that account. But that, I take it, is precisely the force of the argument from error, and that's why it's worth taking seriously in the context of the naive account; namely because it starts off from equally common-place or naïve truths and seeks to derive a problem for the naïve account on that very basis i.e. on the basis of things that the naïve account it itself committed to accepting. But nonetheless one might still be puzzled by the suggestion that there's any kind of tension here. After all, even if the naïve account thinks that the beliefs that one forms about the world in cases of illusion and hallucination may be warranted by one's perceptual experience, that account surely isn't committed to thinking that in *these* cases one gains or is in a position to gain knowledge of how the world is. Rather, it is in those, presumably far more common cases, of veridical perception in which, according to the naïve account, one may gain such knowledge. But why, one might wonder, should the fact that one can fail to know in certain kinds of cases, tell us anything important about how it is that one can count as knowing in a different kinds of case?

The suggestion that one can come to know about how the world is when one veridically perceives the world to be a certain way, may in itself be perfectly consistent with the argument from error, or at least as I have so far presented that argument. What the argument from error seeks to undermine is the suggestion that in such cases (which we may, for convenience call 'the favourable case'), it is one's perceptual experience which itself directly warrants one's belief. According to the argument from error, if one is to count as thereby potentially knowing something about how the world is, one *also* needs a reason to believe

that one is not in the kind of case, (which we might call 'the unfavourable case') in which one is merely suffering an illusion or hallucination, that is, a case in which one's belief would be mistaken, and in which one would therefore fail to know anything about how the world around one is.

To make this step of the argument a bit clearer let's focus on a more concrete example. Let's suppose that I am in a so-called favourable case, and I am having a veridical visual experience as of an orange. Why can't I count as knowing that 'that's an orange' in this case simply in virtue of how my experience (veridically) presents the world to me as being? According to the naïve view I can, and according to the argument from error I can't - I also need a reason to believe that I'm not in the unfavourable case. Why, according to the argument from error, do I also need a reason to believe that I'm not in the unfavourable case? Why isn't it sufficient for me to count as knowing in *this* case, that I simply am having a veridical perceptual experience, which itself directly warrants my true belief that 'that's an orange', irrespective of anything else that I have reason to believe?

According to the argument from error such a suggestion doesn't even really make sense. For if we look more closely, what we are being invited to envisage according to that argument is a case in which I know that 'that's an orange' *despite* the fact that I have *no reason* to believe that I am not in the unfavourable case in which I am merely suffering an illusion or hallucination, and in which it is therefore false that 'that's an orange'. But how can I possibly count as *knowing* that 'that's an orange' if, for all that I have got reason to believe, I am in a case in which it's false that 'that's an orange'? If everything that I have got reason to believe leaves it open whether I am in a case in which what I believe is in fact true, as opposed to a case in which what I believe is false, then I surely don't thereby know that

'that's an orange'. One way to see this might be to reflect upon the thought that if I've got no reason to believe that I'm not in case in which it's false that 'that's an orange', then it's surely just a complete accident, with respect to everything that I've got any reason to believe, if that belief in fact turns out to be true. But how can we allow that I thereby know that 'that's an orange', if it's a complete accident with respect to everything that I have got any reason to believe that what I believe is true? I'm just lucky if things turn out that way. But isn't the point of characterising someone as knowing something meant to be to rule out the possibility that she's just lucky, from an epistemic point of view, if what she believes turns out to be true? Indeed isn't that precisely why wishful thinking, for instance, isn't a way of gaining knowledge about the world, despite the fact that the beliefs thereby gained might in fact turn out to be true? The wishful thinker has got no reason to believe that what she believes is true, and that's why she doesn't count as knowing. So how can we allow that I can count as knowing when I'm in the favourable case, if I've got no reason to believe that I'm not in a case in which my belief is false?

The basic thought, then, is that given that one sometimes make mistakes, it's not sufficient for one to count as knowing how things are, that one's experience merely happens to veridically present the world as being a certain way. Rather, if one is to count as thereby knowing, one also needs a reason to believe that one is not in a case in which one's belief would be false, and in which one would therefore fail to know. Indeed, the argument from error doesn't, as should be clear, even seem to need to claim that one does in fact sometimes make mistakes. For the purposes of that argument, it seems perfectly sufficient that such mistakes are merely possible. For instance, if that argument really is convincing, then surely it wouldn't be any less convincing if we always simply happened to veridically perceive the

world. If we can at least conceive of cases of illusion and hallucination, then it looks like we need a reason to believe we're not in such cases if we are to count as knowing.

4. A More Sceptical Twist

As I have so far presented it, the argument from error claims that, to the extent that one's perceptual beliefs are to function as sources or potential source of knowledge about the world, one also needs a reason to believe that one is not in the unfavourable case. Such beliefs are thus not, contra the naïve account, directly warranted by one's perceptual experience. That, then, is the challenge posed for the naïve account by the argument from error, as I have so far presented that argument. However, that argument can of course also be pursued in a more sceptical direction. To see this, suppose we concede that we do need a reason to believe that we are not in a case in which our belief would be mistaken, if we are to count as knowing how things are in the world around us as a result of how we perceive the world to be. An obvious question to ask at this point would therefore be: in virtue of what does one have any such reason? It's hard to see how one's experience itself could give one any such reason. After all, cases of illusion and hallucination may be subjectively indistinguishable from cases of veridical perception. But if that's so, how, it might be wondered, could one's experience itself give one any reason to believe that one was in one case as opposed to the other? Indeed, there might seem to be an obvious problem with the suggestion that one's experience itself could give one a reason to believe that one wasn't in the unfavourable case. After all, one sometimes makes mistakes when one believes things to be a certain way on the basis of one's experience, and hence one needs a reason to believe that one is not in such a case. Such a line of thought might therefore seem to give rise to a certain kind of regress. Alternatively, a different response might be to try appealing to a more general belief, perhaps to the effect that cases of illusion and hallucinations are rare, and

hence that it is at least unlikely that one is victim to one on the present occasion. But even if this belief could itself give one a reason for believing that one wasn't suffering from an illusion or hallucination in the present case, such an appeal might seem to simply invite the question of what in turn one's justification for this belief is supposed to be. If such a belief is held to be part of what warrants one in any particular perceptual belief, as this line of thought suggests, then one's warrant for this belief must in turn presumably be independent of one's particular perpetual beliefs, and one might well question whether that is or can be so.

5. The Regress Argument

Pursued in this form, the argument from error is reminiscent of another argument, namely the so-called regress argument. According to the regress argument, being warranted is a positive property of a belief. In other words, a belief is only warranted or justified if one has grounds which support it. Moreover, one's grounds only provide justification for one's belief to the extent that one is justified in one's grounds. So, if it's a belief which provides grounds for another belief, then, according to the regress argument, that belief can only do so where that belief is in turn justified or supported by grounds, which are in turn justified or supported by grounds and so on, and so on. Such a regress might be called a simple regress; it's simple insofar as the question of what justifies one in a certain belief is pursued at one level, in a way that will shortly become clear. According to exponents of this argument such a regress is vicious, and if it is to be stopped (as it must be, given it's vicious), it is argued that, there must be some beliefs which aren't justified by other beliefs, but are rather justified or warranted in some other way. It's worth briefly pointing out that the naïve account seems to be perfectly consistent with the simple regress argument. After all, according to the naïve account one's perceptual beliefs are justified by one's perceptual experiences, and one's experiences presumably aren't themselves beliefs. In terms of the regress argument we might

claim that what justifies such beliefs is the fact they derive from, or are grounded in a certain source, namely perception or rather, one's perceptual experience.

However, the regress argument can of course also be pursued across levels. So for instance in the case in which one's belief is claimed to be justified by appeal to the fact that it derives from a certain source, one can ask what one's justification is for believing that one's source is functioning properly. Moreover, if what is claimed to justify one's belief that one's source is functioning properly is another belief, then we can presumably raise, once again, the question of what one's justification is for this belief, and so on, and so on. Alternatively, if we appeal to a source again, then it seems like we'll still stuck with a form of the levels regress. We haven't succeeded in stopping that regress (as the foundationalist claims we must); rather we seem to have merely moved up a level, since according to that argument we can of course raise the same question again at this level (i.e. what is one's justification for believing that *this* source is functioning properly and so on and so on).

Viewed in this light we might think of the naïve account as one way of giving expression to the idea that the levels regress doesn't really get started in the case of perceptual beliefs, or at least not in any way that is obviously vicious. According to the naïve account, one's perceptual beliefs are directly justified by one's perceptual experience. One doesn't also need a reason to believe that one is in fact having a veridical perception (i.e. one's source is functioning properly) as opposed to suffering from an illusion or hallucination. Even if we can raise a question about what justifies one in believing that one is having a veridical perception, such a question doesn't seem to give rise to a vicious regress in the context of perceptual beliefs in the way the foundationalist suggests it does, precisely because such a belief is not claimed to be part of what justifies one in one's perceptual belief. As we've just

seen, however, the point of the argument from error is precisely to suggest that one does in fact need a reason to believe one is having a veridical perceptual experience, if one's perceptual beliefs are to be warranted in such a way that they can function as potential sources of knowledge about how the world is. According to that argument, given that when one forms one's belief on the basis of how one's experience presents the world as being to one, one's belief can be mistaken, it is claimed that one also needs a reason to believe that one is not in a case in which one's belief would be mistaken. To that extent we might think of the argument from error as one way of motivating a form of the levels regress in the context of perceptual beliefs. And indeed it might be claimed that the latter argument is not by itself and stated in this form particularly convincing - or at least the claim that such a regress is obviously vicious isn't.[6] After all, why should we agree that one needs to be justified in believing that one's source is functioning properly in order to be justified in one's perceptual beliefs? The argument from error can thereby be seen as providing a certain kind of motivation for that argument by suggesting that, in the case of perceptual beliefs, given that one's source can fail to function in the right kind of way (i.e. in a way that is incompatible with one's acquiring knowledge), one does need a reason to believe that it is functioning properly. And hence one is off on the races again....

6. Conclusion

We'll look at the relationship between these two arguments in more detail later on. I want to start by focusing in more detail on the argument from error, insofar as that argument seems to pose a more direct or immediate, and in some ways more intuitive threat to the naïve account than the regress argument. However if that argument and the regress argument are connected in the way I have been suggesting they may be, then it might be hoped that if we can work

[6] Cf. Wright, who says of a similar principle, which he calls the Proper Execution Principle, that it is 'apt to

out what to say about the argument from error, then perhaps that might tell us something about what we ought to say about the regress argument. The problem, then, is to see how we can hold onto the naïve view (i.e. the view that I can come to know how things are in the world simply on the basis of how I perceive the world to be), in the light of the argument from error. In order to do this I want, in the next chapter, to start by looking more carefully at what exactly it is about perceptual beliefs that is thought to make them vulnerable to the argument from error, and hence why that argument is meant to create a problem for the naïve account.

---

impress as barely more than a platitude' (1991: 99).

Chapter 2: Disentangling The Problem

1. A Foundationalist Alternative

In the previous chapter, I outlined a naïve account of perceptual warrant, and suggested that despite its intuitive appeal, that account is opposed to what many philosophers have traditionally wanted to say about perceptual warrant. I went on to consider some arguments against the naïve account. These arguments have often been taken to motivate a traditional form of foundationalism, which, for reasons which will soon become apparent, I am going to call appearance foundationalism. The appearance foundationalist rejects the naïve account on the ground that it fails to satisfy the epistemological demands associated with the arguments which we looked at in the previous chapter, namely, the argument from error and the regress argument[7].

In the previous chapter I claimed that appearance states are those distinctive psychological states which occur when one is perceiving. According to the appearance foundationalist such states do not directly warrant our perceptual beliefs as the naïve account suggests. However, they do directly warrant beliefs about our own appearance states. I am going to refer to such beliefs as 'appearance beliefs'. Appearance beliefs are beliefs in propositions expressed by sentences of the form 'It appears to me as if....'.[8] According to the appearance foundationalist, the justification of one's more ordinary perceptual beliefs is to be accounted for indirectly by way of appeal to one's appearance beliefs. Appearance beliefs are therefore privileged vis-à-vis perceptual beliefs.

---

[7] Traditional appearance foundationalists include C. I. Lewis, Chisholm and Ayer. See Lewis 1946, 1952, Chisholm 1966, 1982 and Ayer 1969.

[8] There are different views one could hold about what appearance states are. Such views yield slightly different formulations of what appearance beliefs are. I am going to prescind from such issues.

What I want to do in this chapter is to look more closely at why, if one was impressed by the argument from error, one would want to privilege appearance beliefs in this way. What is it more specifically about appearance beliefs, in contrast to perceptual beliefs, which is claimed to help us with that argument? The aim of this discussion is not to put us in a better position to evaluate the appearance foundationalist's own account of the justification of our perceptual beliefs, and I will not be considering the question of whether, having so privileged appearance beliefs, that account faces difficulties of it's own. It's purpose is rather to help us get clearer about what it is about perceptual beliefs by contrast which is thought to leave them vulnerable to the argument from error, and the discussion will accordingly be organised with this purpose in mind. The advantages of structuring the discussion in this way are two-fold. First, if we can see what it is about perceptual beliefs that is thought to leave them vulnerable to that argument then we'll be in a better position to see how to defend the naïve account in the light of that argument, and that of course is our ultimate aim. Secondly, however, I'm going to argue that it's less obvious why appearance beliefs, in contrast to perceptual beliefs, should be thought to help us with the argument from error than is perhaps commonly assumed.

Why, then, if one was impressed by the argument from error would one want to privilege appearance beliefs in an account of perceptual warrant? Given that appearance foundationalists accept the argument from error in the context of perceptual beliefs, why do they think that we can't run a similar argument against appearance beliefs? In other words, why can't we start off by pointing out that when one believes oneself to be appeared to in certain ways on the basis of being appeared to in those ways one sometimes makes mistakes, and hence conclude that one's appearance beliefs cannot, contra appearance foundationalism, be directly warranted by one's simply being in such psychological states? Rather in order for

such beliefs to be warranted, one would also need a reason to believe that one was not in a case in which one's appearance belief would be mistaken.

One response to this line of thought would be to suggest that in the case of appearance beliefs one doesn't make mistakes, and hence that the argument from error simply doesn't get started in this context. After all, if one didn't make mistakes, why would one need a reason to believe that one's present situation was relevantly different from a case in which one would make mistakes? Indeed, if there were no cases in which one did make such mistakes, what would such a reason even look like? But it's not clear that this can be quite right. After all, as we saw in the previous chapter, the argument from error doesn't seem to need to suggest that one *actually ever does* make mistakes. For the purposes of that argument, it seems sufficient that mistakes are, in some sense to be explained, merely possible. So if appearance beliefs genuinely are immune to the argument from error, it must be because in the case of such beliefs it's not even possible, in the relevant sense, that they might be mistaken. The problem, therefore, is to spell out what it would mean to say that one's appearance beliefs can't be mistaken in the relevant sense, and moreover to do so in such a way that it is plausible that such beliefs are not, unlike perceptual beliefs, vulnerable to that argument.

2. A Simple Reading

In order to explore these issues I want to begin by looking at one relatively straightforward way of spelling out the idea that one's appearance beliefs can't be mistaken. I'm going to call this way of understanding appearance foundationalism, the Simple Reading[9]. According to the Simple Reading of appearance foundationalism, one's appearance beliefs are infallible, whereas one's perceptual beliefs are not. If a belief is infallible, then it can't be mistaken.

[9] For someone who emphasizes the centrality of infallibility for appearance foundationalism, see Dancy 1985.

But if a belief *can't* be mistaken, then the argument from error really doesn't get started. So that's why one's appearance beliefs, in contrast to one's perceptual belief, are claimed not to be vulnerable to that argument.

Now I think that the Simple Reading is mistaken, both philosophically and historically, as a reading of appearance foundationalism. But the ways in which that line of thought goes wrong are instructive and it's for that reason that I want to pursue it. I'm not going to claim that the fact that one's appearance beliefs are infallible has got nothing to do with why such beliefs are claimed not to be vulnerable to the argument from error. And of course appearance foundationalists clearly do think that our appearance beliefs are infallible[10]. What I want to suggest is that the fact that such beliefs are infallible is not the whole story, as the Simple Reading suggests. And one reason for thinking that that is so is because once we get clear about what it means to say that a given belief is infallible, then we can agree that certain of one's perceptual beliefs might also be infallible in the relevant sense, but that such beliefs are nonetheless still subject to the argument from error. Indeed, I'm going to suggest that it's even open to appearance foundationalists to agree with this, despite the fact they haven't traditionally done so. As I'm going to set things up, what's really important to the appearance foundationalist's privileging of appearance beliefs is the claim that one's appearance beliefs are *indefeasible*. And, of course, it's arguable that one aspect of a belief's being indefeasible is it's being infallible (although as we'll see later, the converse isn't true). So it's not that infallibility is irrelevant, it's just that it's not the whole story. Thus, if we want to challenge the appearance foundationalist's privileging of appearance beliefs and hold onto the naïve account, what we really need to do is either show that one's perceptual beliefs may also be indefeasible. Or alternatively, if they're not, we need to show how we can hold

[10] See, for example, Lewis 1946.

onto the naïve account despite the fact that they're not. And this in turn is what we'll be looking at in the third and final chapter.

3. Infallibility

In order to see why it's not simply because one's appearance beliefs are infallible that they are claimed to help us with the argument from error, we obviously first need to get clear about what it actually means to say of any belief that it is infallible in the relevant sense. One important thing to bear in mind in this context is this: if it is claimed that one's appearance beliefs are not vulnerable to the argument from error because they are infallible, it must be the case that their being infallible tells us something about *why* it is that we are warranted in these beliefs in the way that the appearance foundationalist wishes to claim that we are. In other words, it must tell us something about why one is claimed to be in a position to form an epistemically favourable belief about how one is appeared to simply in virtue of one's being in a certain psychological state. But if infallibility is meant to be epistemically relevant in some way, then ways of framing that notion which don't make that relevance clear are obviously going to be inappropriate.

For instance, there's a sense in which you might say that a subject counts as infallible if she believes any necessary truth. Roughly, she's infallible in the sense that what she believes can't be false. Or rather, it's impossible for her to believe what she does in fact in the circumstances believe, and for her belief to be false. After all, what she believes is necessarily true. But it seems fairly obvious that this can't be what appearance foundationalists have in mind when they talk about infallibility. That notion, after all, is meant to be epistemically relevant. But intuitively the mere fact that one's belief might be 'infallible' in this sense does nothing to explain why it is that one's belief is justified. After

all, one can be unjustified in believing a necessary truth. For instance, suppose I believe that 3+5 = 8, on the basis of doing some simple mental arithmetic. But as it happens I'm actually very bad at mental arithmetic and frequently go wrong in making similar calculations. It's just that this time I happen to be right. Here it seems that although what I believe is necessarily true, my belief isn't justified. In other words, I'm not justified *despite* the fact that what I actually believe can't be false, or that I couldn't have gone wrong in believing what I actually do believe. So if the fact that one's appearance beliefs are infallible has got anything to do with why those beliefs aren't subject to the argument from error it can't be simply because such beliefs are infallible in this sense.

One way to make sense of the thought that I'm not justified in this case, might be to focus on the idea that there's a sense in which *I could easily have been wrong.* Now of course what I actually believe is necessarily true, so to say that I could easily have been wrong can't mean that what I believe could easily have been false. After all there's no way that what I believe could have been false. Rather the thought would be that, given that I'm so bad at arithmetic, I could easily have had a different belief; and one which would in the circumstances, have been false. Indeed in this case, one which would have been necessarily false. To borrow a phrase of McDowell's, you might say that in this case I'm just not 'hooked up' to the relevant facts in the right kind of way. And it's because I'm not so hooked up, that the fact that what I believe is true is just a piece of luck as it were from the epistemic perspective. And it's the fact that I'm just lucky in this way that explains why I don't count as being justified.[11]

So when the appearance foundationalist talks about infallibility and the idea that the subject can't be mistaken, what they would seem to mean isn't simply that there are certain things

[11] Cf. Williamson 2000: 123. For further discussion of these issues, see Sainsbury 1997.

which you can't believe and be wrong in so believing. Rather what they would seem to want to capture in saying that the subject can't be mistaken is also the kind of thought we just tried to bring out. Namely the thought that one couldn't in addition easily have had a different belief, which belief would, in the circumstances, have been mistaken. And such a notion clearly does seem to be epistemically relevant in some way. Not only is what one believes true but, given that one couldn't easily have had a different belief which would not have been true, it seems that it's no accident that what one believes is true[12].

4. Source and Subject Matter

I want to suggest that there are two different ways in which one might make sense of the idea that the subject is infallible in this sense. I'm going to call these the Subject Matter, and the Source Reading, respectively. According to the Subject Matter Reading, we're to explain why a subject can't go wrong in the relevant sense in a favoured class of her beliefs, by adverting to the special content of those beliefs. What's special about the content of these favoured beliefs is that the mere entertaining of such thoughts, puts one in a position to see that such thoughts must be true. Thus construed, 'infallible beliefs' would be like so called self-evident truths like 'whoever is tall, is tall', where one's grasp of their content puts one in a position to see that they must be true.[13] According to what I'm calling the Source Reading, in contrast, the fact that the subject is infallible in certain of her beliefs isn't necessarily a function of the special content of such beliefs. Rather, the fact that the subject can't go wrong in the relevant sense is to be explained by reference to the fact that she formed those beliefs in a certain way, namely in such a way as to ensure that what she believed couldn't, in

[12] See, especially, ch.2 of BonJour 1985 for an attack on the idea that 'infallibility' could ever be epistemically relevant.
[13] One might compare this with attempts to explain a priori knowledge in terms of analyticity.

the circumstances, have been mistaken. In other words, such beliefs are formed in such a way that whatever the subject thereby believed, what she believed couldn't be mistaken[14].

In which sense of 'infallible', does the appearance foundationalist think that one's appearance beliefs are infallible? Whilst this point is perhaps not always sufficiently appreciated in the literature[15], I think that it's clear that it is in the second of these two senses in which one's appearance beliefs are claimed to be infallible. According to the appearance foundationalist it is not that, as our first reading would have it, there's a distinctive subject matter, namely 'appearances', about which one is claimed to be infallible. And indeed that is so for good reason. After all, the mere entertaining of propositions about appearances does not put one in a position to see that such propositions must be true. One way to see this would be to consider a case in which I entertain the proposition that you express by saying 'I am appeared to in such and such ways'. In such a case, it seems relatively obvious that I can't thereby just tell that this proposition is true. Or at most, if I am in a position to see that it's true, it's not my mere entertaining of the proposition that enables me to see that that is so. Rather, it's because I can accept your word for it. However, it might of course be suggested that this merely turns upon the peculiarity of the example, namely that *I* am entertaining a proposition about appearances that only *you* are properly in a position to see is true. It's *your* mere entertaining of the proposition which puts you in a position to see that it is true. But I think that this would be a mistake, and in fact the claim holds good even in the case in which it's me who's entertaining the relevant belief.

---

[14] Making such a distinction does not require a total separation between these two issues. Presumably, the fact that certain beliefs can be formed in such a way as to ensure that what one thereby believes is true has got something to do with what those beliefs are about.

[15] See Pollock 1986, especially ch. 2, and ch. 4 of Dancy 1985.

The fact that when I have a certain belief about how I am appeared to, that belief can't be mistaken according to the appearance foundationalist, isn't because my grasp of it's content puts me in a position to see that what I believe is true. Rather, it seems that if I am infallible in such a belief, it's because I'm actually appeared to in those ways and form my belief on that basis. According to the appearance foundationalist, one might say, I form my belief on the basis of confronting or being presented with the very facts that make my belief true. Of course, having formed my belief on that basis, I am allegedly in a position to see that what I believe is true according to the appearance foundationalist. But my having so formed my belief isn't a feature or function of the content of such beliefs.

One reason for drawing such a distinction would be if one thought that one could hold beliefs about how one was appeared to on other grounds. In such cases we're not going to get the same kind of explanation of why what the subject believes is true, if it is, and of why the subject is claimed to be justified in such beliefs. For instance, you might think that you can hold beliefs about how you are appeared to on inductive grounds. Pollock gives the following example[16]. Suppose you have an alarm clock and it appears in the lower left hand corner of your visual field and you notice that every time the alarm goes off, it appears to you as if the alarm's little red light is flashing. But suppose further, that there's a bee buzzing around your nose and you're so busy focusing on the bee that you don't focus on the alarm clock and the little red light. But you hear the alarm go off, and that, Pollock suggests, gives you inductive grounds for believing that 'it appears to me as if there's a red light flashing' - even if, being too busy focusing on the bee, you fail to notice it.[17]

[16] Pollock 1986: 59-60.
[17] For further discussion of failing to notice, see Martin 1998.

Even if one thought that one's belief about the light couldn't be mistaken in such a case (and such a claim might well be challenged[18]), one isn't justified in this belief simply on the basis of one's actually being appeared to in that way. If one is justified in believing that 'it appears to me as if a red light is flashing' in this case, then one is presumably justified on the basis of other beliefs, namely those that figure as premises in one's inductive argument. Even if one thinks that the only grounds upon which one can hold beliefs about how one is appeared to is directly on the basis of being appeared to in those ways, that still wouldn't make it the case that it is solely in virtue of one's grasp of the content of such beliefs that such beliefs can't be mistaken. Rather one would simply have built in the condition that 'appearance beliefs' just are those beliefs which one forms in virtue of being in such a psychological state.

And of course this is clearly recognised by or implicit in the appearance Foundationalist's own account. After all, according to the appearance foundationalist one's 'appearance beliefs' are not in the favoured sense (i.e. in the sense in which such beliefs are claimed to help us with the argument from error) just any old beliefs that happen to be about appearances. Rather, in the sense in which such beliefs are to be privileged, they are also fundamentally beliefs that one hold on the basis of being so appeared to.

I'm not suggesting that such a claim might not be challenged. The most favourable way of sketching a pure subject matter account would presumably be to insist that the propositions in question are such that they can only be entertained in the presence of their experienced subject matter, and only therefore by the subject of such experiences. In other words, only I can entertain the relevant proposition (you don't even count as grasping or entertaining it), and moreover even I can only do so when I am actually being so appeared to. But if that's

[18] For instance, suppose that the LED has just broken.

right then it might seem as if my mere entertaining of the relevant proposition really is a sufficient condition for my grasp of it's truth. I'm not convinced by such a proposal and am not therefore going to discuss it any further. Such a proposal would seem to rely upon some version of the private language hypothesis, which as such is in tension with the inherent generality of language use. It does seem right to say that I can entertain such propositions at other times and in other circumstances. But if it is at least conceivable that I could frame that very thought other than in the presence of it's subject matter (i.e. on other occasions), then it's apt to seem as if one picking out something special about the actual circumstances in which I do entertain the proposition in question which ensures that I can't be mistaken. To that extent, one might wonder how far such an account really does succeed in giving us a pure subject matter account – and isn't merely a re-labelling of a source account[19].

According to the appearance foundationalist then, the fact that one's 'appearance beliefs' are infallible in the relevant sense isn't simply a function of the special content of such beliefs. Rather to the extent that such beliefs actually are infallible, such a status derives from the fact that the *subject forms those beliefs in such a way as to ensure that what she believes can't, in the circumstances, be mistaken*; where, in the case of appearance beliefs, the way she forms them consists in her forming them on the basis of being in the distinctive psychological state of being appeared to in those ways.

5. Infallible Appearance Beliefs

Of course, merely to point out that this is the sense in which one's appearance beliefs would be infallible according to the appearance foundationalist, obviously leaves open the question of whether one's appearance beliefs actually are infallible in this sense. I'm not going to

[19] Cf. Lewis on the ineffability of the given in Lewis 1946.

have very much to say about this issue, partly because I don't, as I said earlier, think that much ultimately hinges on the claim that they are. The basic idea is that when one forms one's appearance belief on the basis of being appeared to in those ways, one is presented with or 'confronts' the very facts which make one's belief true[20]. Given that that is so, how it is asked *could* one's belief be mistaken? And indeed much of the appeal of the claim that they couldn't seems to turn upon the simple difficulty of imagining what such a mistake would consist in. There is less consensus on this issue in the literature[21]. Part of the problem in this area concerns how exactly we ought to spell out the notion of a 'mistake'.

For instance many appearance foundationalists themselves concede that there is room for a 'mistake' in giving a description of how one is appeared to, but dismiss such cases as merely verbal errors which somehow don't count[22]. A more interesting kind of case concerns mistakes due to inattention or a failure to notice aspects of how one is appeared to. Such a failure to notice needn't be due to any carelessness on the subject's part. Our experience is, one might say, replete and there is a limit to the number of things to which any of us can pay attention at any one time. But in such cases we arguably can make sense of the subject having a mistaken belief about how she is appeared to (if, that is, her beliefs are, as they presumably are, based on what she notices). For instance, looking at an array of 13 flags I might fail to notice 2 flags and mistakenly believe that 'it doesn't appear to me as if there are 13 flags'. Here it seems that I clearly do have a mistaken belief about how I am appeared to. Such examples raise various questions. For instance, one question is obviously whether traditional appearance foundationalists would accept that one could fail to notice in this way, and if so, whether that was indeed a form of carelessness. A different question is whether

[20] Such a claim is often put by saying that the way that one is appeared to is self-intimating or 'given' to one in experience

[21] For contrasting approaches to this issue, compare Haack 1993 and Williamson 2000.

negative appearance beliefs to the effect that 'it doesn't appear to me as if...', are to be counted as genuine appearance beliefs at all. Perhaps it will be suggested that such beliefs are not held directly on the basis of how one is appeared to but rather on the basis of an inference from beliefs about how one actually is appeared to (e.g. the belief that 'it appears to me as if there are 11 flags') and a more general belief to the effect that 'if it appears to me as if there are 11 flags then it doesn't appear to me as if there are 13 flags'. The latter belief, though false, isn't a belief that I hold on the basis of how I am appeared to. In contrast, the former belief, while held on the basis of being so appeared to, is not itself strictly speaking false (although the belief that 'it *only* appears to me as if there are 11 flags' would be). Perhaps it will be conceded that at most such cases highlight that one may be *ignorant* of certain aspects of how one is appeared to, but that ignorance does not count as a form of error.

The issues here are complex and I don't, as I said earlier, intend to solve them all here. Fortunately, however, we don't need to. Let's suppose for the sake of argument that one's appearance beliefs actually are infallible in the relevant sense, and that the fact that such beliefs are infallible in this sense has got something to do with why one is claimed to be justified in holding such beliefs. If the Simple Reading is correct, that is, if it's because one's appearance beliefs are infallible in the relevant sense that not vulnerable to the argument from error, then it seems that one way in which to defend the naïve account against that argument would be to show that certain of one's perceptual beliefs might also be infallible in the relevant sense. Now it might be pointed out that this is all well and good, but the problem is obviously that one's perceptual beliefs aren't infallible in this sense, and indeed it's precisely because they're not that they are subject to the argument from error. Whilst this is no doubt a

[22] See Williamson 2000 for a variant on this strategy which uses the idea that the judgements you employ all

typical reaction to such a suggestion, such a seemingly innocuous line of thought embodies various assumptions that are both questionable and rarely made explicit.

6. Infallible Perceptual Beliefs

To see that there might be a problem here, let's take the case in which one sees that there's a pig. According to what I'm going call the Infallibilist Response, seeing, like knowing, is factive. In other words, if one really does see that there's a pig over there, then it can't be the case that there's really no pig over there and that one is merely suffering an illusion or hallucination to the effect that there is. According to the Infallibilist Response, the psychological state that one is in when one sees that there's a pig is not the same as the state that one is in when one has an illusion or hallucination as of a pig's being over there, and in which perhaps one *merely* seems to see that there is a pig[23]. In the veridical case, what one is presented with is literally an aspect of the world - the visible facts are in some sense constituents of one's perception and one is thus in direct contact with the world. According to the Infallibilist Response given that this is so, it seems to be equally true that if one believes that there's a pig over there on the basis of actually seeing that there's a pig over there, then one's belief can't, in the circumstances, be mistaken. Moreover it's equally hard to see how, in such a case, one could easily have had a different belief which would, in the circumstances, have been mistaken. If I really do see that there's a pig over there, what else ought I to believe given how my experience presents the world as being to me? Of course, I might not pay sufficient attention to how my experience presents things as being to me, or I might have an inappropriate classification in mind, but we saw earlier that one's appearance beliefs may also be subject to such 'mistakes', if indeed they are to be counted as genuine mistakes at all.

---

involve vague predicates..

It might be pointed out that one can of course believe that there's a pig over there on the basis of merely seeming to see that there's a pig, but where because for instance one is hallucinating it's not the case that there's a pig over there, and hence one's belief is, in the circumstances, mistaken. And it might be suggested that it is in this sense in which one could easily have had a belief which would have been mistaken. The problem with this line of thought in the present context is that it's unclear what the relevance of the fact that one can mistakenly believe the proposition 'there's a pig over there' (on the basis of being in one kind of psychological state) is to the case in which one believes that proposition on the basis of being in a different kind of psychological state, namely one in which one actually sees that there's a pig. Nothing in our original argument in favour of the claim that one's appearance beliefs are infallible, supports the idea that it is propositions of some sort (i.e. those about how one is appeared to), which are immune from mistake in the relevant sense. As we saw earlier, the fact that one may be infallible about how one is appeared to isn't because there's a distinctive subject matter, namely appearances, about which one can't go wrong. Rather, the thought was that in the case in which one believes that one is appeared to in a given way, on the basis of actually being appeared to in that way, then one's belief is immune to mistake.

According to the Infallibilist Response, then, once we get clear about the precise sense in which even appearance beliefs are themselves infallible, there's no reason to think that more ordinary perceptual beliefs that one forms in virtue of being in certain factive mental states like seeing that things are thus and so, couldn't also be infallible in the relevant sense. Of course one is not infallible about 'porcine presence' in general, but the argument for infallibility doesn't turn upon or require any such idea.

---

[23] Of course this is not to deny that the two cases have something in common. For instance in both cases it looks

I'm not suggesting that such a line of thought might not be challenged. For instance, one might challenge the assumption that in such cases one does in fact form one's belief on the basis of being in so-called factive mental states, of which seeing that is claimed to be an example. One way in which to do so would be to argue that we are never in such factive mental states at all. Of course, such a line of thought needn't be committed to denying that we can ever truly be said to see, nor that 'seeing' is not factive. Rather the thought would be that in the sense in which seeing is factive, it is not a purely psychological or mental state of a subject that she can correctly be said to be in, and thereby from beliefs on the basis of in the relevant sense[24]. According to this line of thought the Infallibilist Response goes wrong because it misidentifies the source of our perceptual beliefs. Our perceptual beliefs are never formed on the basis of our being in so-called factive mental states which themselves ensure the truth of what we thereby believe, and hence the beliefs thereby formed are not infallible in the relevant sense. While such a response may be correct, and we'll return to it again at the beginning of the next chapter, I don't think that the appearance foundationalist has to appeal to any such considerations in order to defend their privileging of appearance beliefs. Showing why this is so is the aim of the next section of this chapter.

7. The Limits of Infallibility

Let's suppose that the appearance foundationalist agrees with the Infallibilist Response that certain of one's perceptual beliefs may also be infallible. That's only problematic from the perspective of defending their privileging of appearance beliefs if the Simple Reading is correct; namely, if the appearance foundationalist really is committed to thinking that it's simply because one's appearance beliefs are infallible that they are not vulnerable to the

---

to one as if there is a pig. See Snowdon 1988 for more on this.

argument from error. In the light of our previous discussion I want to suggest that the Simple Reading misinterprets appearance foundationalism. I want to suggest that the reason why one's appearance beliefs are privileged is that, according to the appearance foundationalist at least, one's appearance beliefs are *indefeasible*. Moreover, like the claim that such beliefs are infallible, the claim that such beliefs are indefeasible is grounded in the appearance foundationalist's conception of the states upon which those beliefs are formed. According to this way of reading appearance foundationalism, the Infallibilist Response goes wrong not necessarily because it thinks that certain perceptual beliefs might count as infallible, but rather because it assumes that it follows from this that such beliefs are not subject to the argument from error. But according to the appearance foundationalist, infallibility isn't enough. In order to be immune to that argument such beliefs would also have to be indefeasible, and perceptual beliefs don't pass this test.

In order to evaluate this suggestion we therefore need to address the following three questions. First, why, according to the appearance foundationalist, isn't infallibility enough to help one with the argument from error? Secondly, why does indefeasibility help one with that argument? And thirdly, are one's appearance beliefs actually indefeasible?

To turn to our first question; the argument from error starts from the premise that one sometimes makes mistakes when one forms one's belief in a certain kind of way, and concludes that given that this is so, in order for such beliefs to be warranted (in such a way that one may come to have knowledge on that basis) one also needs a reason to believe that one is not in such a case. But according to the Infallibilist Response, it's false that when one forms one's belief on the basis of being in certain factive mental states one sometimes makes

[24] See Williamson 1995 for a brilliant attack on a parallel claim about knowledge.

mistakes. According to the Infallibilist Response, such beliefs can't be mistaken and moreover it's not the case that one could easily have had a different belief which would have been mistaken. However, given that this is so, why can't the belief which one forms in virtue of being in such states be directly warranted by the fact that they are formed in this way? Why should we think that in order to be warranted in such beliefs one would also need a reason to believe that one was not in a case in which one would make a mistake? Indeed, given that there are no cases in which in forming one's belief on such a basis one would make a mistake, what would such a reason even look like?

Perhaps the Infallibilist will agree that in order to be warranted in beliefs that we form on the basis of being in certain other kinds of psychological states (i.e. those we are in when we suffer an illusion or hallucination), we would need a reason to believe that we aren't in such cases; and perhaps if we don't or can't have any such reasons, then that just goes to show that the beliefs thereby formed are not warranted. But why should the mere fact that there are other less epistemically favourable ways of forming our beliefs tell us anything about what warrants those of our beliefs which are not formed in this way, but rather on the basis of being in factive mental states?

One response to this line of thought would be to appeal to the fact that forming one's belief on the basis of being in those other less epistemically favourable states is *subjectively indistinguishable* from forming one's belief on the basis of being in such allegedly epistemically favourable factive mental states. According to the appearance foundationalist it might be claimed that the fact that when one forms one's belief on a certain basis one's belief can't be mistaken, doesn't help one in the context of the argument from error, if one has got no reason to believe that one is in fact forming one's belief on such a basis. But if one can't

tell which method one is employing, why should the mere fact that one is actually employing a method of belief formation by the use of which one does not make mistakes, be thought to put one in a secure epistemic position? According to this suggestion, even if these two methods are different they are epistemically speaking relevantly similar, given that one can't tell which method one is employing in any given case.

One problem in this context is that it's unclear why the Infallibilist should agree that one can't tell which method one is employing. Such a claim does not seem to follow in any straightforward way at least from the claim that forming one's belief one the basis of being in the unfavourable states is subjectively indistinguishable from forming one's belief on the basis of being in the favourable states. For it may be that the subjective indistinguishability in question is essentially asymmetrical. To say that two things are indistinguishable is to say that it's not possible in certain circumstances to know that they're not identical. It is thus an epistemic observation. The simplest explanation of indistinguishability would be to reduce it to identity in some respect. If the explanation of why two things are not knowably distinct is because those two things are identical, then the condition that one can't distinguish them is symmetrical. In other words, it holds of you in all circumstances. But this is precisely what the Infallibilist Response denies. They deny that the subjective indistinguishability of the two methods reduces to their identity in some respect; rather it is a purely epistemic observation. But if that's right, then should they agree that the fact that it's not possible in certain circumstances to know that the two methods are not identical is symmetrical i.e. that it holds of you in all circumstances?

In other words, why should they agree that it follows from the fact that if you are not perceiving properly that you can't tell that you're not; that if you are perceiving properly you

similarly can't tell that you're not? Perhaps the Infallibilist will concede that if one is employing the unfavourable method one can't tell that one is, and perhaps if the beliefs thereby formed are to be warranted, one would therefore need a reason to believe that one was not employing such a method. But why should they agree that it follows from this that if one is employing the favourable method one can't tell that one is? Perhaps one can't tell *whether* one is employing the favourable or the unfavourable method, but why should that necessarily be a problem? As Williams[25] points out:

> The idea of one's being able to tell whether S seems to entail the conjunction of two things:
>
> (a) One can tell that S when S;
>
> (b) One can tell that not-S when not-S
>
> We may be tempted to think that (a) and (b) must go together. The vital point, for the present question, is that they do not necessarily go together.....for many values of 'S', (b) can obtain without (a) obtaining.

For instance, as Williams points out, the fact that I can't tell that I am dead when I am dead, obviously doesn't imply that I can't tell that I am not dead when I am not dead! But if one is both employing a method by the use of which one doesn't make mistakes, and when one is employing this method one can tell that one is, why should the beliefs thereby formed, be vulnerable to the argument from error?

8. Two Kinds of Defeat

In order to see what is wrong with this line of thought according to the appearance foundationalist, we need to look more closely at the notion of indefeasibility and at why the fact that a belief is indefeasible does help one with the argument from error. In order to do

---

[25] Williams 1978: 310.

this we obviously first need to get clear about what exactly it means to say of a given belief that it is indefeasible. To say that a belief is indefeasible is to say that that belief is variously, immune to, not subject to, or can't be defeated, where what is claimed to get defeated is one's justification or warrant for the belief in question. Standardly it's thought that there are two basic forms of defeat to which a given belief might be subject, and to which indefeasible beliefs are therefore immune. First, there's what is called *rebutting defeat*. The crucial point about rebutting defeat for our purposes is that it can only operate where you have a belief of which you're not certain. One immediate problem would therefore be to say what it means to claim that one is 'certain' of a given belief. For the time being I am going to assume, as indeed the appearance foundationalist does, that to say that one is certain of a given belief is to say that one necessarily treats all beliefs which are inconsistent with what one believes as being false[26]. Given that you have a belief of which you're not certain, rebutting defeat works by providing you with reasons for thinking that what you believe is false. In other words, it defeats your justification by rebutting what you believe. An example of rebutting defeat might be where I glance at the American flag and thereby come to believe that it has exactly 11 stripes. If however I also know that the American flag actually has 13 stripes, then this piece of background information ought to defeat my justification for believing there are exactly 11 stripes. In other words my background belief about the American flag ought to convince me that what I believe as a result of my brief glimpse was mistaken, and hence that I must have miscounted, or misperceived it.

The other kind of defeat to which a given belief might be subject is called *undercutting defeat*. In contrast to rebutting defeat, undercutting defeat doesn't work by providing you with reasons for thinking that what you believe is false. By itself, undercutting defeat ought

[26] The idea is that if one is certain then one can rationally rule out certain contingent falsehoods, not that it's a

to simply leave you agnostic about whether things really are as you'd otherwise (i.e. but for the defeating information) believe them to be. Rather undercutting defeat works by undermining or 'undercutting' your reasons for believing what you do. How exactly we ought to model undercutting defeat more precisely is, like the parallel question about rebutting defeat, difficult to say especially in terms which don't in some way beg the question against either side in our debate. One way to model undercutting defeat would be to suggest that it works by removing the evidential support that one's grounds provide for one's belief[27]. However, such a characterisation is problematic in the cases we are considering, that is, ones in which one's grounds are claimed to be not some proposition believed, but rather the operation of some kind of source. A different way to make sense of undercutting defeat might be to suggest that it defeats your justification for what you believe by giving you reason to believe that the source, upon whose operation your being justified depends, is not in fact functioning properly or perhaps at all. The basic thought in this context would be that if your being warranted depends upon the proper operation of a source, then we ought to allow that a subject can lack warrant for her judgement if she's got good reason to believe that her source is not in fact functioning properly. An example of undercutting defeat might be where I have a certain belief about the deeds of the Virgin Mary because of the testimony of Saint Bernadette. If, however, I discover that Saint Bernadette is a great confabulator then that doesn't necessarily give me a reason to think that what I believe is false. Rather my discovery defeats my justification by giving me reason to believe that believing what I do because of the testimony of Saint Bernadette isn't a good reason for so believing.

9. Infallibility and Indefeasibility

---

necessary truth that these inconsistent claims are false.

[27] The basic idea is that one's grounds remain but that they are evidence for beliefs in question no longer holds in the circumstances. See Martin 2001.

Now we're got a bit clearer about what it means to say that a belief is subject to defeat we can begin to see what, according to the appearance foundationalist at least, is wrong with the Infallibilist Response. According to the Infallibilist Response certain of one's perceptual beliefs, namely those which one forms in virtue of being in certain factive mental states, may be infallible. Given that in the case of such beliefs one doesn't make mistakes, the initial suggestion was that such beliefs are warranted simply in virtue of the fact that they are formed in this way. Why would one also need a reason to believe that a mistake had not been made, as the argument from error suggests? The response was that the fact that one's belief might be infallible in this sense would only help one in the context of the argument from error if one could tell that one was in fact employing such a method, but that in the case of perceptual beliefs one couldn't - given that employing such a method was subjectively indistinguishable from employing a different method by the use of which one did make mistakes. The response to this was to suggest that it didn't follow from the fact that if one wasn't forming one's belief in the infallible way that one couldn't tell that one wasn't, that if one actually was forming one's belief in the infallible way that one similarly couldn't tell that one was. But if the beliefs thereby formed couldn't be mistaken, and if one could tell that one was indeed forming one's belief on such a basis, why would such beliefs be vulnerable to the argument from error?

The problem that the appearance foundationalist will want to discern in this context centres on the question of whether a belief's being infallible implies that the belief in question is also indefeasible. If a belief can be infallible without also being indefeasible, then it looks like it's not true that when one forms one's beliefs on the basis of being in factive mental states (i.e. in such a way as ensures that what one thereby believes can't be mistaken), one can tell that one has formed one's belief in this way. After all, if one could really tell that one had,

then how could one's justification for the beliefs thereby formed ever be defeated? But if one can't tell on what basis has formed one's belief, then it looks like one does after all need a reason to believe that one has not formed one's belief in such a way that one would make a mistake.

Another way to put this would be to say that if a belief can be infallible without also being indefeasible, then it looks like more is needed for one to be warranted in such beliefs than simply that one's belief is infallible. To say that a belief is not indefeasible is to say that one's justification for that belief can be defeated. But if it's sufficient for one to be warranted in such beliefs that one's belief simply be infallible, then it's hard to see how one's justification could be defeated. Why couldn't one simply ignore the defeating considerations and still be justified? Let's take the case of undercutting defeat as an example. If one's being justified in such beliefs simply depended upon the fact that one's belief was formed in a certain kind of way as the Infallibilist Response suggest, then why (if one's belief is indeed formed in that way) should evidence to the effect that it's not *ever* be relevant to one's justification? If such evidence isn't relevant to one's justification, then surely one would be justified in simply ignoring it. But to say that one's belief is defeasible is precisely to claim that one would not be justified in ignoring such evidence - so it looks like it is relevant to the issue of whether one is justified or not.

According to the Infallibilist, the fact that certain of one's perceptual beliefs are infallible is relative to the fact that those beliefs are grounded in a certain source, namely the fact that one forms those beliefs on the basis of being in certain factive mental states. But if one can have doubts about whether one's beliefs are in fact formed in this way, and if one would not be justified in simply ignoring such doubts, then a gap would seem to open up in that account

between the claim that certain of one's beliefs are infallible, and the claim that those beliefs are therefore justified. If one ignores the doubts in question and persists in one's unqualified beliefs then one's beliefs will not be mistaken. But one won't be justified. In other words, being infallible in this sense is no guarantee that one's beliefs are justified.

Given that one's belief can be infallible but still unjustified it looks like more is needed for one to be warranted in such beliefs than simply that one's belief be infallible in this sense. And it should be relatively clear by now what more the appearance foundationalist will wish to claim is required. According to the appearance foundationalist, if one's belief can be defeated, then in order to be warranted in such beliefs one also needs a reason to believe that one's belief is not in fact defeated. According to the appearance foundationalist, even if one's perceptual beliefs may be partially warranted in virtue of the fact that they are formed in such a way as to ensure that what one thereby believes can't be mistaken; this isn't sufficient if one can also have a reason for thinking that such beliefs are mistaken. Rather, in order to be fully warranted in such beliefs one would also need a reason for believing that such beliefs are not in fact mistaken. And the obvious question which arises is, in virtue of what does one have any such reason?

According to the appearance foundationalist, the reason why one's appearance beliefs can by contrast be directly warranted by the fact that they are formed on the basis of being in a certain psychological state (namely, an appearance state), isn't simply that those beliefs are infallible. Rather it's because one's appearance beliefs are also indefeasible. In the case of indefeasible beliefs, it's not just that one's beliefs can't be mistaken. Rather one can't even have a reason for thinking that such beliefs are mistaken. So it is in this sense in which one's appearance beliefs can't be mistaken. Mistakes aren't possible and, moreover, it's not even

conceivable to you that such beliefs might be mistaken. But if one's belief can't be mistaken, and if one can't have a reason for thinking that such beliefs are mistaken, then presumably one is indeed in the best possible epistemic position. So, in the case of indefeasible beliefs, the higher order demand that one be warranted in believing that one's belief is not defeated doesn't seem to get started. Or rather, this demand can be met by appealing to (one's apriori knowledge) of the impossibility of defeat.

We'll be looking at some of these issues in more detail in Chapter 3 in connection with perceptual beliefs. Before we do that however I want to just make a few brief comments about whether one's appearance beliefs actually are indefeasible, as the appearance foundationalist suggests they are. Of course, from the perspective of defending the naïve view it's irrelevant whether one's appearance beliefs actually are or aren't indefeasible. What's important is ultimately whether its right to think that a belief would have to be indefeasible in order not to be vulnerable to the argument from error. But even if a belief doesn't have to be indefeasible in order not to be vulnerable to that argument, it's arguable that indefeasibility would certainly be one way not to be vulnerable to that argument. If we can see in what sense, if any, one's appearance beliefs actually are indefeasible, we'll be in a better position to evaluate the question of whether one's perceptual beliefs may also be indefeasible. And if one's perceptual beliefs are indefeasible, then we obviously don't need to bother showing how a belief might not be vulnerable to that argument despite the fact it's not indefeasible.

10. Indefeasible Appearance Beliefs

According to the appearance foundationalist, one's appearance beliefs aren't, in the favoured sense, subject to either rebutting or undercutting defeat. In the context of rebutting defeat, the

basic thought is that one's appearance beliefs are certain or 'incorrigible' and so won't, as we saw earlier, be subject to rebutting defeat. This claim is meant to be an upshot of the fact that such beliefs are both infallible and not subject to undercutting defeat – so what I really want to focus on is whether such beliefs are subject to undercutting defeat. However, if one wasn't persuaded by the argument for thinking that such beliefs are infallible, then one would presumably want to challenge the claim that such beliefs aren't subject to rebutting defeat.

How do matters stand with respect to undercutting defeat? Recall that according to the appearance foundationalist, appearance beliefs are those beliefs you hold on the basis of being appeared to in various way, and indeed one's being infallible in the relevant sense, and hence as the appearance foundationalist has set things up, one's being justified, depends upon the fact that such beliefs are held on such a basis. So we do seem to have the conception of some kind of epistemically relevant source in play, namely one's being appeared to in various ways. According to the appearance foundationalist, however, the reason why such beliefs aren't subject to undercutting defeat, despite the fact that they do depend upon the proper operation of some kind of source, is that we can't make sense of the idea that one might have genuine doubts about the proper functioning of that source. In other words, we can't genuine doubt whether we are being appeared to in a certain way. Rather, whether we've being appeared to in a certain way is something that is simply *evident* to us. So you can just tell by reflection or introspection, whether the relevant source is in fact operative in a given instance. Or to put it somewhat differently, whether one's grounds are in place is something which one is necessarily in a position to know.

Is the fact that one is being appeared to in a given way something that is simply evident to one? To see that there might be a problem in this context, recall that I suggested earlier that

one could fail to notice certain aspects of how one is appeared to, and that in the case in which the subject does so fail to notice we arguably could make sense of her having a mistaken belief about how she is appeared to, (if her beliefs are, as they presumably are, based on what she notices). Given that according to the appearance foundationalist, one's appearance beliefs are meant to be infallible, I suggested that what the appearance foundationalist should say is that whilst such beliefs are about appearances- they aren't actually appearance beliefs in the favoured sense. According to this line of thought, such beliefs aren't held on the right basis and so don't count as genuine 'appearance beliefs'. Rather, the thought would be that this is a case in which the relevant source, upon whose proper operation one's actually having genuine appearance beliefs depends, fails to be operative in the right kind of way. I claimed that such a line of thought would have to concede that one might be ignorant of certain aspects of how one is appeared to, but that it didn't follow from this that one's genuine appearance beliefs could be mistaken or in error.

The problem with this line of thought in the present context, is that it might seem to open up a space in which undercutting defeat can get the needed foothold. That's because whether one is failing to notice some aspect of how one is appeared to arguably isn't something that is simply evident to the subject. One can't just tell by reflection whether one is failing to notice some aspect of how one is appeared to. From the inside, one might claim, there's no difference between failing to notice some aspect of how one is appeared to and one's simply not being appeared to in that way. But if it's not evident to one whether one is so failing to notice, then how can it be evident to one whether one is in fact having a genuine appearance belief? If, however, it's not evident to one whether one is having a genuine appearance belief, and one's being infallible and hence justified, depends upon the fact that one is, then undercutting defeat can surely get the needed foothold - namely, by providing one with

reasons to doubt whether one is in fact having a genuine appearance belief, which doubt you're not as we've just seen in a position to settle from the inside.

One way in which to challenge this line of thought and defend the idea that it is evident to the subject whether she is being appeared to in a given way, would be to challenge the assumption that whether one is failing to notice is not an aspect of one's mental state that one is necessarily in a position to know by mere reflection. Alternatively, a different response, would be to challenge the implicit assumption that the case in which one fails to notice is relevantly similar to the case in which one doesn't. According to this line of thought, if you are failing to notice it might not be evident to you that you are failing to notice. However, according to the present suggestion, that doesn't show that if you do notice it's not evident to you that you are being appeared to in those ways. But according to this line of thought, one's genuine appearance beliefs just are those beliefs that you have when you don't fail to notice; where, given the asymmetry, the fact that you aren't failing to notice is evident to you and hence such beliefs are not, as the appearance foundationalist maintains, subject to undercutting defeat.

11. Conclusion

I'm not necessarily endorsing the appearance foundationalist's line of thought at this point. Whether appearance beliefs really are immune to defeat in the relevant sense is (as I hope to have made reasonably clear) both a difficult question in its own right, and bound up with other equally difficult questions that we've looked at earlier such as the question of whether such beliefs are genuinely infallible. But let's suppose for the sake of argument that such beliefs are immune to defeat. As I pointed out earlier that only helps motivates the appearance foundationalists' privileging of appearance beliefs, if it can be shown both that

perceptual beliefs aren't indefeasible, and that if they aren't one really is in an insecure epistemic position as the argument from error suggests. We'll be looking at these two questions in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Defeasibility Examined

1. Infallibility Reconsidered

In the previous chapter I looked at one way in which to spell out the naïve view, which I called the Infallibilist Response. According to the naïve view our perceptual experiences directly warrant our perceptual beliefs, and the Infallibilist appeals to the fact that, in certain cases at least, one's perceptual experiences consist in a direct awareness of how things are in the world around one to explain why that should be so. In other words, in being in those psychological states that one is in when one veridically perceives that things are thus and so, one is presented with the very facts which make one's belief true, and the warrant for such beliefs is claimed to be a function of the fact that when one forms one's beliefs on such a basis, what one thereby believes can't be mistaken. However, if, as I suggested in the previous chapter, *indefeasibility* is the key to the key to the argument from error, and if a belief's being infallible does not imply that that belief is indefeasible, then one obvious question which arises is, why should infallibility be desirable at all? Indeed, it might be suggested that infallibility is only epistemically interesting insofar as it figures as one element of indefeasibility. If this is right, then perhaps that removes any motivation for wanting to hold onto the claim that certain of one's perceptual beliefs are infallible.

Even leaving this aside however, it might be felt that the Infallibilist Response isn't necessarily the best, or indeed the most obvious way in which to spell out the naïve account on independent grounds. It might be thought that *if* one's perceptual experience does play some kind of warranting role, that this is a fallible one. One reason for thinking that, would be if one thought that one was employing the same 'method' of belief formation in the case of veridical and non-veridical perception i.e. in cases of illusion and hallucination. As we

saw in the previous chapter, this is precisely what the Infallibilist response denies. There seem on the face of it to be two reasons why one might think that one is employing the same method in all three cases. On the one hand, if one's 'method' is a matter of what psychological state one forms one's belief on the basis of, then one reason for thinking that one is employing the same method in all three cases would be if one thought that one was in the same psychological state in all three cases. Indeed we looked at exactly such a line of thought in the previous chapter. Alternatively, even if one thought that one was in different psychological states in the three cases, one might still think that one was employing the same method. One reason for thinking that would be if one thought that one could only properly be said to be employing a given 'method' (as opposed to a different method), if one was necessarily in a position to know which method one was employing, and one thought that one was not necessarily in a position to know which psychological state one was forming one's belief on the basis of in these three cases[28].

It is not my aim to decide between these two responses. The important point for present purposes is simply that one might think that one is employing the same 'method' in all three cases. But if that's so, then it seems that one's method is a fallible one, given that in cases of illusion and hallucination what one believes is mistaken. According to what might be called the Fallibilist Response, however, even if one fails to acquire knowledge in such cases, one's beliefs may still be warranted. According to this line of thought, one's perceptual beliefs are formed on the basis of one's being in a certain psychological state, and indeed the warrant for such beliefs is to be explained by reference to this fact. But the states in question are not (or at least not always) sufficient to ensure the truth of what one thereby believes. Hence, the beliefs in question are not infallible in the relevant sense. According to the Fallibilist,

[28] One would need to do something to motivate the idea that one can only be said to be employing a given

however, one's perceptual beliefs may be warranted *despite* the fact that they are not formed in such a way as to ensure that what one thereby believes can't be mistaken.

According to the Fallibilist, then, one's perceptual beliefs may be warranted even in cases of illusion and hallucination, where what one believes is false. In contrast, such a claim does not seem to be available to the Infallibilist. If the warrant for such beliefs is wholly a function of the fact that in being in certain psychological states, one is presented with the facts that make one's belief true, then one is presumably not warranted in cases where the facts are not present, such as in cases of illusion or hallucination. Or rather, if one's beliefs are warranted in such cases, it is presumably in a very different sense from that in which they are warranted in the veridical case; and if so, we would presumably need some alternative explanation of why these beliefs should be warranted at all, and it's unclear what kind of explanation might be forthcoming. Perhaps the Infallibilist will agree that one's mistake in such a case is 'blameless' in some sense, but insist this is not enough to give one's belief positive warrant. It is often thought that this is a very counterintuitive consequence of the Infallibilist view. That, might therefore be one reason for favouring the Fallibilist view.

The problem for the Fallibilist by contrast is to say why forming one's belief in this kind of way should have the warranting property that the Fallibilist claims it does. One reason for thinking that there is a problem here is because the notion of warrant seems to be importantly related to the notion of truth. To say that one's belief is warranted after all, is to say that one is warranted in taking what one believes to be true. Moreover we are interested in our beliefs being true, or that we know and knowledge implies truth. So, why should we be interested in

---

method if one is necessarily in a position to know that one is. This looks like a very strong requirement. For a further discussion of this idea, see Williamson 2000, in particular Chapter 8, page 179.

our beliefs being 'justified', if that doesn't carry any implications about whether those beliefs are true or not?

The major advantage of the Infallibilist Response is that it seems to make sense of this connection in a relatively straightforward way. According to the Fallibilist however, the explanation of how one forms one's belief does not ensure that things are as one warrantedly takes them to be. Given that one's method can therefore go wrong (i.e. can issue in false beliefs), there doesn't seem to be any direct connection between forming one's beliefs in this kind of way and the truth of what one thereby believes. Presumably therefore, the connection with truth is to be secured indirectly. The most obvious way in which to do so would be to claim that, even if one's method is not infallible, it is at least *reliable*. For instance, Burge claims that:

> Epistemic states can be warranted even though their representational content is not veridical. Being warranted entails being well-positioned to achieve or indicate truth in normal circumstances, given certain limitations on the individual's abilities and perspective...Being warranted entails being reliable, at least under certain conditions. The reliability necessary for being warranted must be associated with the nature and function of the individual's representational systems, and with the way representational content is established for these systems. The reliability must obtain in standard use in normal circumstances. (Burge: forthcoming)

One immediate problem for the Fallibilist is that when one knows that something is the case, what one believes can't be mistaken. Knowledge after all is factive; when one knows, what one believes is true. Given that according to the Fallibilist one's being warranted leaves it open whether what one believes is true, that account will presumably need to add the

additional requirement that what one believes is in fact true, if they are to have something that might intelligibly amount to knowledge that things are so. But according to the Fallibilist it will be insisted that it is enough for one's belief to be warranted that one's method merely makes what one believes likely to be true.

Such an account raises various questions and it's far from clear whether the Fallibilist really can accommodate the idea that when one knows, one can't be mistaken, quite so easily. To see this more clearly let's take as an example a case in which one knows that there's a pig over there as a result of veridically perceiving that there's a pig over there. If one knows that there's a pig over there, then one is presumably warranted in believing that there is a pig over there and, according to the Fallibilist, this is grounded in the fact that when one believes that there's a pig over there on the basis of how one's perceptual experience presents things as being to one, one's belief is likely to be true (given that one's perceptual experience is reliable). In fact one's belief is true in this case, so one thereby knows that 'there's a pig over there'.

One question which such an account raises is why the fact that one's experience makes the belief that there's a pig over there likely to be true, should warrant one in believing that there is in fact a pig over there, as opposed to merely warranting one in believing that 'it's likely that there's a pig over there'. However, if one is only warranted in believing that 'it's likely that there's a pig over there', and if, as it happens, there is in fact a pig over there, then surely what, if anything, one thereby knows is that 'it's likely that there's a pig over there'. Of course it's also true in this case that there is in fact a pig over there. But why should that have any bearing on what you count as knowing, if your grounds only warrant you in believing that it's likely that there's a pig over there? This is highly counterintuitive – we

don't normally think that we are only in a position to know or warrantedly believe the likely or probable whereabouts of pigs. We take it that we are very often in a position to know such things as that there is in fact a pig over there, and not merely that 'it's likely that there a pig over there'.

The problem in this context is that knowledge not only excludes falsity in one's belief, but it also excludes the possibility that one has got hold of the truth by accident. But isn't it always an accident on the Fallibilist's account if one's warranted belief in fact turns out to be true? Of course as the Fallibilist sets things up, it is admittedly not a complete accident relative to the grounds upon which one is claimed to form one's belief if things do in fact turn out to be that way. After all, one's experience is a reliable guide to how things are and hence forming one's belief on such a basis at least ensures that one's beliefs are likely to be true. But it might be claimed that it is an accident epistemically speaking at least, relative to one's being so warranted, if one's belief in fact turns out to be true, and that one is not in a case in which a largely reliable habit of belief formation leads one astray, (given that one's experience is presumably not completely reliable). One reason for thinking that it is an accident if what one believes turns out to be true is because when one knows according to the Fallibilist, one is in exactly the same position with respect to what one is warranted in believing as someone who is wrong. And of course, they don't know. But given that they don't know, how it might be asked can it be that you count as knowing, if you are ex-hypothesis in exactly the same position as someone who doesn't know? Of course you're not in exactly the same position, after all what you believe is true. But isn't there a sense in which you're just lucky if things turn out that way, and that you're not in a case in which your belief is false? This intuition is nicely brought out by McDowell in the following example[29]:

[29] Cf. Williamson 2000 esp. ch. 9 pg. 203-7

> Consider a device about which one knows (unproblematically, let us suppose) that it will produce outcome A in, on average, ninety-nine cases out of a hundred and otherwise outcome B. Think of a roulette wheel with ninety-nine red slots and one white one. Given the task of predicting the outcome of a given spin, one will of course predict red (even if white is "overdue", since that does not make the probability of white on any one spin any greater). Suppose one make's one prediction, the wheel is spun, and the result is red. Did one's prediction then amount to knowledge? Surely not; for all one knew, the result was going to be white. The fact that one had an argument that established a high probability for the outcome one predicted – so that one had excellent reasons for one's prediction – makes no difference at all to that. We can change the example to make the probability higher, but I cannot see how changing the figures can make any difference of principle. If there is one white slot out of thousands or millions, one does not know that the result will not be white. I think that the moral is that being known cannot intelligibly be seen as some region at the high end of a scale of probabilification by considerations at the knowers disposal, perhaps with room for argument about how high the standards need to be set. (McDowell 1998b: 421-2)

Of course according to our Fallibilist the warrant that one's perceptual experiences are claimed to provide for one's perceptual beliefs does not consist in one's possession of an argument that establishes a high probability of what one believes being true. Rather one's experience itself is claimed to warrant one's belief. But the underlying explanation is the same, insofar as the explanation of why one's experience should warrant one's belief appeals to the fact that one's perceptual experiences are a reliable guide to how things are and hence the beliefs thereby formed have a high probability in their favour.

But perhaps intuitions differ in such cases. Perhaps the Fallibilist will insist that one does know that the result will not be white in such a case - after all, one has a warranted belief to that effect, and there's a sense in which it's no accident if this belief turns out to be true (after all, one's argument establishes a high probability in it's favour). Or perhaps, even if the Fallibilist thinks that one doesn't acquire knowledge in this case, they will claim that the perceptual case is somehow relevantly different. For instance, perhaps they will claim that one doesn't even count as 'reliable' in this case and that's why one doesn't count as knowing. One reason for thinking that, would be if one thought that reliability also had a counterfactual element. In other words, it's not enough for knowledge-conferring warrant that one's belief merely has a high probability in it's favour and is true in the actual world[30].

Alternatively, perhaps the Fallibilist will claim that the connections between warranted belief and knowledge are simply less straightforward than these objections suggest. Perhaps a more complicated story needs to be told about the relationship between these two notions. Now while this is no doubt true, and I certainly don't take myself to have ruled out the Fallibilist Response, these objections seem to me to highlight certain potential problems with that view, and set limits on the kind of story that could be told. Moreover, it's clear that some such story does need to be told. After all, the naïve view isn't simply that we can sometimes form warranted beliefs about the world around us on the basis of how we experience things to be. According to that line of thought, we can also, on occasion at least, gain knowledge of how things are.

2. Perceptual Defeat

[30] For a statement and defence of this view, see Goldman 1986.

The aim of this discussion has not been to decide between the Fallibilist and the Infallibilist Response, although I do think that the issues that we have been considering lend support to the latter. The important point for present purposes is simply that there are two very different ways in which we might choose to spell out the naïve view that we began with in more detail. In the previous chapter I suggested that the reason why the naïve view has been taken to be problematic doesn't depend – or at least not in any immediately obvious or straightforward way – on whether one's perceptual beliefs are or aren't infallible. I contrasted the naïve view with a traditional form of foundationalism according to which one's appearance belief have a privileged status, and suggested that the reason why one's appearance beliefs were claimed to put one in a secure epistemic position was because such beliefs are claimed to be indefeasible. In the case of indefeasible beliefs, it's not merely that such beliefs can't be mistaken; rather one can't have a reason for thinking that they are mistaken. And the fact that one can't is a reflection of the fact that one is necessarily in a position to know that one has in fact formed one's belief in such a way as to ensure that what one believes can't be mistaken. In other words, in forming one's beliefs on such a basis one thereby has a reason for thinking that one has in fact formed one's belief on such a basis. According to the appearance foundationalist, the fact that a belief is defeasible by contrast is reflection of the fact that one is not necessarily in a position to know that one has in formed one's belief in such a way as to ensure that what one believes can't be mistaken. But why, then, should the mere fact that one forms one's beliefs in a way that ensures that one doesn't (or at least doesn't often) go wrong, be thought to put one in a secure epistemic position, if one has got no reason to believe that one has indeed formed one's belief on such a basis? What I therefore want to look at next is first, whether one's perceptual beliefs may also be indefeasible and how the Fallibilist and Infallibilist respectively make sense of this. And secondly, if one's perceptual beliefs aren't

indefeasible, whether one is therefore in an insecure epistemic position as the appearance foundationalist suggests that one is.

In the previous chapter I distinguished between two different forms of defeat to which a given belief might be subject, namely undercutting and rebutting defeat, and to which appearance beliefs, being indefeasible, are therefore claimed to be immune from. It is commonly assumed that perceptual beliefs are subject to both undercutting and rebutting defeat[31]. Let's start with undercutting defeat. Recall that in the case in which one's being justified depends upon the operation of some kind of source, undercutting defeat works by providing one with reasons for believing that the relevant source is not in fact functioning properly (i.e. in such a way as to be a trustworthy guide to how things are that can, as such, be relied upon in the circumstances). In the case of perceptual beliefs, undercutting defeat seems to work by providing one with reasons to believe that one's perceptual faculties aren't functioning properly or perhaps at all. For instance, you might have good reason to believe that your drink has been spiked and that you're hallucinating. In such a case, the intuition which many have, and which seems to me to a compelling one, is that you wouldn't be justified in simply ignoring such doubts, and persisting in the kind of perceptual beliefs about how things are in the world around one that you'd otherwise (i.e. but for the 'defeating information') be inclined to make. In other words, you ought to allow doubts about whether your perceptual faculties are functioning properly, that is, about whether you are perceiving veridically, rationally to constrain the kinds of judgements that you would otherwise be inclined to make.

[31] For a good statement of this distinction, see Pollock 1986: 38-9.

I'm not suggesting that such a claim might not be challenged. For instance, a hard nosed externalist might simply deny this, but it does seem very intuitive to say that one ought to allow such considerations to rationally bear upon one's perceptual beliefs. Moreover, the fact that a subject can lack warrant for a perceptual belief if she's got good reason to believe that her perceptual faculties aren't working properly, seems to apply even in the case in which the subject is in fact perceiving perfectly normally and merely has good, but what is in actual fact misleading evidence to the contrary. For instance if someone that I trust tells me on good authority that the room that I'm about to enter is abnormally lit so that the walls look to be blue, then I wouldn't be justified in believing that they are blue, even if they may in actual fact be blue and my informant is (uncharacteristically) misleading me. In this case, if it looks to me as if the walls are blue, that can only be because they are in fact blue. So it would be no accident in a sense that what I believed was true, but nonetheless my belief doesn't seem to be justified.

Perceptual beliefs are subject to undercutting defeat. How do matters stand with respect to rebutting defeat? Rebutting defeat works by providing one with reasons for thinking that things are not as one's experience presents them as being. In other words, it provides one with reasons for thinking that what one believes as a result of how one's perceptual experience presents things as being is false, and it is in this way that it is claimed to defeat one's justification. One problem in the context of perceptual beliefs is that it's often difficult to separate out cases of rebutting and undercutting defeat. In its pure form, undercutting defeat ought to simply leave one agnostic about whether things really are as one's perceptual experience presents them as being. In other words, it doesn't give one a reason to think that what one believes as a result of how one's perceptual experience presents things as being is actually false. Rather, it undercuts one's grounds for believing what one does. In other

words, it provides one with reasons for thinking that believing things to be so because of how one's perceptual experience presents them as being is not a good reason for believing what one does. A pure case of undercutting defeat would be one is which one has a reason not to rely upon one's perceptual faculties, but in which one doesn't have evidence to the effect that things are positively other than how one's perceptual experience presents them as being. But undercutting defeat often figures as part of rebutting defeat. For instance, to use an earlier example, suppose that I'm looking at the walls in the room and come to believe that the walls are blue on the grounds that that's how my perceptual experience presents them as being to me. If my trustworthy informant comes in and tells me that the walls are in fact white and only look to be blue because of the abnormal lighting, this would a case of rebutting defeat. In such a case, I don't just have a reason for thinking that I shouldn't rely upon how my perceptual experience presents things as being to me (although I do of course have that too). Rather, I have a reason to believe that things are not in fact how my experience presents them as being, and therefore have a reason for thinking that I shouldn't rely upon my perceptual faculties.

In the previous chapter I claimed that rebutting defeat could only operate where one has a belief of which one is not certain. I suggested that, according to the appearance foundationalist at least, to say that one is certain of a given belief is to say that one necessarily treats all beliefs which are inconsistent with what one believes as being false. A different way that this is sometimes put is by saying that when one is certain of a given belief, one takes the probability of that belief's being true, conditional on any other beliefs, to be 1. And hence you take the probability of any beliefs which are inconsistent with your certain belief (i.e. rebutters for that belief) to be 0. But if you have a 0 degree of belief in the

rebutter, that is just to say you take that belief to be false, and it's hard to see how such a belief can therefore rationally be brought to bear upon one's other beliefs.

According to the appearance foundationalist, the fact that perceptual beliefs are subject to rebutting defeat is a reflection of the fact that one can't be certain of such beliefs. And that seems right - one can't be certain of such beliefs, or at least not in the sense favoured by the appearance foundationalist. To see this, let's consider what might be thought to be the best possible test case in the context of perceptual beliefs. Suppose then that you have a certain perceptual belief, say the belief that 'that's a pig', as a result of the proper functioning of your perceptual apparatus and you in fact have no reason to believe that your faculties aren't functioning properly. According to both the Fallibilist and the Infallibilist your belief is justified. However even in this, the most favourable case, the Fallibilist and the Infallibilist will concede that you can at least *conceive* of different circumstances in which there is in fact a pig present, your perceptual faculties are working perfectly normally, but in which you have certain defeating information. For instance, perhaps you have good reason to believe that what you see is a Martian and not in fact a pig, and hence have good reason to believe that you must be misperceiving or hallucinating. In such a case, given that one can't necessarily tell whether one is veridically perceiving how things are, the Fallibilist and the Infallibilist will concede that if you were to persist in the belief that 'that's a pig' in these circumstances then (all else being equal) you wouldn't be justified. So, even though were you to believe the same proposition in the two cases, on what are in fact objectively the very same grounds (namely on the basis of seeing a pig), in the one case your belief would be justified whereas in the other it wouldn't. In other words, according to both the Fallibilist and the Infallibilist, even in the most favourable case it's not true that you *necessarily* treat all beliefs which are inconsistent with what you believe i.e. 'that's a Martian', as being false; precisely because

you recognise that there are other cases in which believing the very same thing on what are objectively the very same grounds, you wouldn't treat that belief as being false i.e. you don't assign it a 0 probability. But, according to the appearance foundationalist at least, that's just to say that you're not certain of your original belief, precisely because you don't assign it a probability of 1 conditional on *any* other beliefs. And it's because you're not certain of your perceptual belief that it is subject to rebutting defeat.

Moreover, this would seem to apply to all one's perceptual beliefs, insofar as for any such belief there are circumstances in which you perceive something to be the case, but in which you have reason to believe that you are misperceiving or hallucinating. Hence, given that you can't necessarily recognise whether you are in fact perceiving, your belief isn't certain and hence is subject to rebutting defeat. Indeed, if I could be certain of a perceptual belief in the sense favoured by the appearance foundationalist it's hard to see how my perceptual beliefs would be defeasible at all. If being justified in a perceptual belief implied that I necessarily took all beliefs inconsistent with what I believed to be false, it's hard to see how such ancillary beliefs could ever bear on my justification for my perceptual belief - but they do, as the unfavourable case makes clear.

3. Making Sense of Defeasibility

How should our Infallibilist and Fallibilist make sense of the fact that perceptual beliefs are subject to defeat? As Martin points out:

> It's difficult to accommodate the reasonableness of this without making room for the subject's appreciation that warrant turns on the presence of a property which he or she cannot necessarily recognise the presence of. (2001:448)

Such a characterisation would seem to fit in nicely with our conclusions about appearance beliefs. After all, in the case of appearance beliefs it is precisely because the subject's being warranted in such beliefs does not turn upon the presence of a property that she cannot necessarily recognise the presence of that such beliefs aren't subject to defeat. In the case of appearance beliefs, the warrant for such beliefs derives from the fact that one forms them on the basis of being in a certain psychological state i.e. those in which one is so appeared to. However, given that whether one is in fact in such a state, is claimed to be 'evident' to one, such a subject lacks any conception of how she could have gone wrong in such a case, and hence there doesn't seem to be any space for the idea that her belief might be rationally defeated. How, then, do our Infallibilist and Fallibilist make room for the subject's appreciation that her being warranted turns upon the presence a property that she can't necessarily recognise the presence of?

According to the Infallibilist, one's perceptual beliefs are (where such beliefs count as warranted), those beliefs which one forms in virtue of being in certain factive mental states like seeing that things are a certain way. According to the Infallibilist, the warrant for such beliefs derives from the fact that when one is in such a state one confronts or is presented with the very facts which make one's belief true. Given such a picture, how does one's good reason to believe that one may, for instance, be hallucinating, undermine one's justification? The answer, I take it, is that it undermines one's justification by giving one reason to believe that one may be in a completely different kind of state in which one is not presented with the facts and in which, according to this line of thought, one therefore has no justification for what one thereby believes to be the case. As we saw earlier, one's mistake in such a case may be blameless in some sense, but, according to the Infallibilist, that doesn't give one's beliefs positive warrant. The reason why the possession of such reasons rationally defeats

one's justification is because one cannot necessarily recognise whether one is in fact in such a factive mental state. Whatever we think about the appearance case, whether one is veridically perceiving how things are is surely not an aspect of one's mental state that one is necessarily in a position to know by mere reflection or introspection.

Turning then to the Fallibilist, how can they accommodate the defeasibility of perceptual justification? According to the Infallibilist undercutting defeat works by providing one with reason to believe that one may be in a completely different kind of state in which one would have no justification at all for the beliefs one would be otherwise inclined to hold. Clearly, however, this explanation won't work for the Fallibilist. After all, according to the Fallibilist, the state one is in is already conceived as neutral, epistemically speaking, between the veridical and the non-veridical case. That's why, after all, one's method is merely reliable according to that line of thought. Given that this is so, however, why should one's good reason to believe that one may be hallucinating undermine one's justification[32]? In other words, given that according to the Fallibilist one may be justified even when one is in fact hallucinating, why should doubts about whether one is veridically perceiving, be capable of rendering one's perceptual beliefs unjustified?

One initial suggestion might be to claim that one is employing a different method in the two cases. The problem with this response is that we don't in general think that taking into account more information counts as the employment of a different method, rather it seems to be a crucial ingredient of any method at all (or at least any method that deserves to be seen as a way of investigating how things are in the world[33]). Alternatively, a somewhat different response might be to try and explain the epistemic difference between the two cases in terms

of the respective reliability of the method as it is employed in those cases. Perhaps the Fallibilist will claim that one's method is (non-accidentally) reliable in the first case but not in the second, and that it is this fact which explains the differing epistemic credentials of the two cases. One reason for thinking that one's method in the second case is not a reliable one is because forming or rather persisting in one's belief in such circumstances (i.e. in which you have defeating information) seems akin to simply ignoring relevant information - and that in general is not a reliable method.

The problem with this response is that it's not clear how far it has really advanced matters. After all, the problem for the Fallibilist is to say why this information should be 'relevant' at all, given that according to the Fallibilist one's being warranted does not depend upon whether one is veridically perceiving. But if it doesn't, why should doubts about whether one is veridically perceiving be relevant to one's justification at all, and, indeed, be capable of undermining one's justification? If one's being warranted simply turns upon whether one's method is in fact reliable, then why is one not justified in simply ignoring defeating information? Moreover, one can presumably envisage cases in which a subject would be highly reliable in ignoring such information. For instance, consider a subject who consistently has the false belief that she is hallucinating just when she is not. If such a subject adopts the policy of conforming her beliefs to how she experiences things to be they will be highly reliable.

A different response might be simply to insist that one's method in the two cases is just relevantly dissimilar, epistemically speaking. In the first case where one is justified one has no reason to believe that one may be hallucinating, whereas in the second case one does. Of

[32] One might allow more room for subtlety on the Fallibilist's part than I do here. For instance, Burge thinks

course, merely to claim that such cases are epistemically relevantly dissimilar isn't all that helpful - we know the Fallibilist thinks that, what we want to know is why that should be so – that, after all, is the problem. However, perhaps the Fallibilist would wish to question what the force of the demand for an explanation in such contexts is meant to be. Even if having such defeating information doesn't count as the employment of a different method, perhaps the Fallibilist will simply insist that one's method is such that it only justifies you when you don't have such defeating reasons and there's nothing more to be said about why that it so.

4. Unfortunate Epistemic Consequences

According to both the Fallibilist and the Infallibilist, our perceptual beliefs are subject to defeat. What unfortunate epistemic consequences can we draw from the fact that this is so, according to the appearance foundationalist? In the previous chapter I suggested that according to the appearance foundationalist the fact that one's perceptual beliefs are defeasible shows that there is always more to being warranted in such beliefs than simply the operation of a given source as the Fallibilist and Infallibilist respectively suggest. Their question is this: if one's being justified in such beliefs simply depends upon the fact that one's belief is formed on the basis of the operation of some kind of source, then why should evidence to the effect that one's source is not functioning properly or (in this case) that one is not perceiving veridically, *ever* be relevant to one's justification? But if such considerations aren't relevant, then why can't one simply ignore them and still be justified? However, the fact that one's perceptual beliefs are defeasible is a reflection of the fact that one can't just ignore considerations about whether one can in fact rely upon one's perceptual faculties. In other words, considerations about whether one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties are

---

that hallucinatory states do not count as genuinely perceptual states at all. See Burge: forthcoming.

[33] For a good discussion of this idea in relation to Nozick see Ayers 1991:134.

relevant to one's justification for one's perceptual beliefs. But if that's so, then why doesn't one need to be justified in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties?

Given that it's conceivable to you that circumstances could be such that one couldn't rely upon one's senses, and given that one ought to allow doubts about whether circumstances are such that one can rely upon one's senses, rationally to constrain one's perceptual beliefs, then surely those beliefs are not justified unless one has a reason for thinking that circumstances actually are such that you can rely upon your perceptual faculties. It's hard to deny that one does at least (tacitly) believe that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties in the favourable case. One certainly acts as one would if one were to believe that that were so. Indeed, if one didn't believe that one could rely upon one's perceptual faculties, then one presumably wouldn't rely upon them in forming one's perceptual beliefs. Or at least not if one is rational. But presumably it's not enough that one merely believes that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties. After all, I might believe that I can in the unfavourable case (and stubbornly refuse to take into account the countervailing information). But the mere fact that I'm stubborn can hardly be thought to render my perceptual justified after all. So it looks like one does need to be justified in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties.

Furthermore, as the appearance foundationalist will wish to point out, the fact that one's perceptual belief can be defeated even when one is in fact perceiving perfectly normally just goes to show that one's source itself does not justify one in this belief. After all, things may be exactly the same with respect to one's source in the favourable and unfavourable case. According to the appearance foundationalist, then, even if one's perceptual beliefs may be partially warranted by the fact that they are formed in a certain kind of way (i.e. that they are

grounded in the operation of a certain source) as the Fallibilist and Infallibilist suggest, this isn't sufficient given that one can be unjustified even when one's source is functioning properly. According to the appearance foundationalist, the fact that one's perceptual beliefs are defeasible shows us that in order to be justified in a perceptual belief one also needs to believe and be justified in believing that one can in fact rely upon one's source, or rather upon how one's perceptual experience presents things as being to one. And this is precisely the conclusion of the argument from error. But if one's source itself doesn't justify this belief, then the obvious question is what does?

One suggestion might be that this belief is justified, if at all, by other beliefs. The problem with this response seem to be twofold. First, its unclear which particular beliefs do in fact justify this belief. But secondly, and as the appearance foundationalist will no doubt be quick to point out, such a response seems to give rise to a fairly obvious kind of regress, insofar we can presumably ask what one's justification is for this belief and so on and so on. Alternatively, if this belief is claimed to be justified by reference to the operation of a certain source, then we can presumably raise a similar question about one's justification for believing that one can rely upon this source. In other words, we've back with a form of the regress. Indeed, this highlights a more general problem with the current strategy. If the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties is itself defeasible, then we can presumably ask what one's justification is for believing that this belief is not defeated. Given that the requirement that one be justified in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties was itself meant to be an upshot of the fact that one's perceptual beliefs are defeasible. Alternatively, if the belief in question is not defeasible, then presumably it's indefeasible. But how could one be indefeasibly justified in believing that one could rely upon one's perceptual faculties?

Indeed, if one could be indefeasibly justified in this belief, then in what sense would one's first order perceptual beliefs be defeasible at all?

This, I take it, is precisely why the appearance foundationalist doesn't think that perceptual beliefs stop the regress, since one can raise a question about what one's justification is for believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties. Moreover, that's precisely why one's appearance beliefs are claimed to have a privileged status, given that in the case of indefeasible beliefs we can't have a reason for thinking that the source upon whose operation one's being justified depends can't be relied upon.

If this is right, then perceptual beliefs don't stop the regress. But perhaps such a conclusion is not fatal to the defence of the naïve view. Perhaps what this show is that in the case of some beliefs we don't have to give an entirely straight answer to the regress. However, the present line of thought seems to raise a more immediate problem for the naïve account. If it's right to say that one does need to be justified in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties in order to be justified in one's perceptual beliefs as the current line of thought suggests, then we'll still left with the problem of saying what does justify one in this belief. If we want to hold onto some version of the naive account, what should we say in response to the question, 'what justifies you in believing that you can rely upon your perceptual faculties?'. I want to suggest that we ought to say one of two things. I'll try and say something in favour of the second option, although, to the extent that we merely want to hold onto some version of the naïve account, I don't think that we necessarily have to choose between them. Either we can claim that one is justified in this belief on the basis of no grounds whatsoever. Or alternatively we can claim that one's perceptual experience itself warrants the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties.

5. Unearned Warrants and Default Entitlement

According to the first response one is claimed to be justified in the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties on the basis of no grounds whatsoever. One way that this claim is sometimes put is by claiming that the belief in question is 'default reasonable', or one to which one is 'default entitled', or again that it is an 'unearned warrant'. For instance Crispin Wright seems to have some such idea in mind when he writes, in connection with the question of what warrants one in believing that certain circumstances don't obtain which would undermine the use of one's perceptual faculties, that:

> we have to drop the assumption that the availability of a warrant consists in the possibility of acquiring it. Warrants - at least some warrants - can be unearned. (1991: 104)

Wright's thought is that one does need to be justified in believing that such circumstances don't obtain in order to be justified in one's first order perceptual beliefs, but that one doesn't need to do anything epistemically speaking, in order to acquire or 'earn' a warrant for this belief. One doesn't need to acquire any evidence or grounds that support this belief. Rather, one is justified in this belief without grounds. Similarly, Burge's thought is that one is entitled to 'presume' that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties, but that this is not a presumption for which one needs a 'justification' or reason. Indeed, Burge thinks that a similar 'entitlement' holds in connection with beliefs acquired by the operation of one's memory or by testimony[34].

Such a line of thought raises two questions. First, what does it actually mean to say on this account that one is 'justified' in the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties?

Or, to put it somewhat differently, what is supposed to be the difference between one's being justified and unjustified in this belief? Secondly, and relatedly, *why* is one claimed to be justified in this belief? Of course, this can hardly be to ask what one's grounds are for this belief - after all the whole point of the present suggestion is to deny that it is a belief for which one requires grounds. But perhaps some account can and should be given of why one is claimed to be justified in this belief, given that one has no grounds for it.

With regard to the first question, one reason for thinking that there's a potential problem in this context is that one can fail to be justified in the relevant second order belief. Indeed, if one was always justified in believing that one could rely upon one's perceptual faculties, it's unclear why one's perceptual beliefs would be defeasible at all. One problem for this line of thought would therefore be to say why, given that this belief is held to be justified without grounds, one can sometimes fail to be justified in this belief, as the so-called unfavourable case seems to make clear. One response would be to claim that there is an asymmetry here between what is required for one to be justified in this belief and what on the other hand can lead one to be unjustified in this belief (i.e. between what supports and what may undermine this belief). According to this suggestion one can be justified in this belief without grounds, despite the fact that one can acquire grounds such that one is not justified in this belief. Indeed it might be suggested that refusing to countenance such a distinction rests on confusing the distinction between what can count as evidence for and against a given belief. However, this contrast is somewhat misleading, given that the present suggestion is precisely that one doesn't need any evidence or grounds for the belief that one can rely upon one's senses, despite the fact that one can of course have evidence to the contrary.

---

[34] I do not mean to suggest that there are no differences between these two positions, but rather that it's

A further challenge to the present proposal would be this: what is the difference between saying the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties is justified and saying that it is unjustified? The claim that one can be justified in a belief on the basis of no grounds can hardly be expected to convince someone, such as our appearance foundationalist, who is impressed by the Regress Argument. According to that argument, being warranted is a positive property of a belief. In other words, a belief is only warranted where one has grounds which support it. But according to the current proposal some beliefs, including the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties - can be warranted without grounds. But according to the regress argument it's unclear what the difference is between claiming that one's belief is 'justified' in this sense (i.e. justified without grounds), and claiming that this belief is unjustified. Of course, one can stipulate that by 'justified' one means to thereby include beliefs which are justified without grounds, but one can hardly expect such stipulations to carry much weight with the appearance foundationalist.

The claim that one is 'default entitled' to the belief in question can have a confusing effect here. Perhaps what is really being claimed is that one can be *entitled* to a given belief without grounds, even if one can't be *justified* in a belief without grounds, and that entitlement and justification are both versions or species of a broader epistemic good, namely, 'justification' in the broad sense. But it's not clear whether that is right. As it is employed by Burge, for instance, the distinction between entitlement and justification doesn't seem to be a distinction between beliefs for which there are no grounds as opposed to beliefs for which there are grounds, rather it seems to be a distinction about one's cognitive access to one's grounds[35].

---

questionable how much these superficial differences really ammount to.

As I have so far presented it, the claim that your belief is 'default justified' is an answer to the question what justifies you in believing that you can rely upon your perceptual faculties. In other words, it agrees with the appearance foundationalist that one does need to be justified in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties, but claims that this belief is justified on the basis of no grounds whatsoever. But in the light of the present discussion, one might think that there is something slightly misleading about this characterisation. If being justified in a belief just means having grounds or reasons for what one thereby believes, there's a sense in which this response is really just saying that one doesn't need to be 'justified' in the relevant second order belief in order to be justified in one's first order perceptual belief.

If this is the right way to think about that position, the problem is to say why it is right to think that one doesn't need to be justified in the strong sense (i.e. have grounds) for believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties, in order to be justified in one's first order perceptual belief. Given that in the unfavourable case it seems that the reason why one's perceptual beliefs aren't justified is precisely because one isn't justified in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties. Indeed, if one was justified in believing that one could rely upon one's perceptual faculties, it's unclear why the case would be unfavourable. Moreover, if one were to be justified in one's perceptual beliefs in such a case, that would only be so if one were justified in the strong sense in the higher-order belief.

What should a defender of the current line of thought say in response to this? One response would be to claim that it misconstrues what reflection upon the unfavourable case shows us, because it misdescribes the difference between the favourable and the unfavourable case.

---

[35] See Burge 1993: 458-9.

According to this line of thought, the crucial point about the unfavourable case is that one has a *positive reason or evidence* for believing that circumstances are such that one can't rely upon one's perceptual faculties. It's because one has got positive evidence to the effect that things are amiss in some way that one's perceptual beliefs aren't justified, and why one would need a reason to believe that things are not in fact amiss in order to be justified in one's first order perceptual belief. In the favourable case by contrast one has got *no reason* to believe that things are amiss in this way, and that's why one's perceptual belief counts as justified in this case. According to this line of thought, it is enough for one's perceptual beliefs to be justified that one merely lack a warranted belief to the effect that one can't rely upon one's perceptual faculties. It's in this sense that one is 'justified' in believing that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties. As Burge puts it:

> Entitlement is overridden if the individual has a warranted belief - or is neglectful in not having a warranted belief - that the situation is abnormal or that other defeaters are in play. To have the entitlement, the individual need not however have a warranted belief that defeaters are not in play...It is enough that the individual lack a reason to avoid relying on the perception. (Burge: forthcoming)

7. Restricting Doubts

If this is right, the problem is to say why it should be correct to describe the favourable case as one in which one has 'no reason' to believe that one's perceptual faculties can't be relied upon. Such a characterisation might be appropriate on the assumption that one is 'default entitled' to the belief that one's perceptual faculties are working properly, but it will hardly impress an appearance foundationalist or anyone is who is convinced by the argument from error. According to that argument the mere fact that one's perceptual faculties *can* fail to function in the right kind of way, and the fact that one can have a reason for believing that

they aren't working properly (even if they are), is enough by itself to show that you need a reason to believe that they are in fact functioning properly. In other words, these facts themselves constitute reasons for thinking that one can't just rely upon one's perceptual faculties. Hence, one needs a reason for thinking that one can.

Indeed, as the appearance foundationalist will no doubt want to point out, this is precisely what the fact that one's perceptual belief can be defeated makes clear. In such a case, the fact that one's perceptual faculties *might* not be functioning properly (even if they are in fact functioning perfectly normally) defeats one's justification for one's first order perceptual belief. The explanation of why that should be so is that, given that one can't necessarily tell whether one is in fact veridically perceiving how things are, one ought to allow doubts about whether one is rationally to constrain one's perceptual beliefs. In such a case, a doubt about whether one's perceptual faculties are functioning properly in the circumstances, is sufficient to undermine one's justification for one's perceptual beliefs, and mean that one does need a reason to believe that they are functioning properly. But in the so-called favourable case it is presumably equally true that one can doubt whether one's perceptual faculties are functioning properly. Moreover, it is surely equally true in such a case that one can't necessarily tell whether they are functioning properly. But if that's so, then what is the difference between the so-called favourable and unfavourable cases supposed to be? Furthermore one may, as we've seen, be believing the very same proposition on what are in fact objectively the very same grounds in both cases. But if that is so, why should one be justified in ignoring the possibility that one's perceptual faculties might not be functioning properly in the one case and not the other?

So we seem to have a simple dilemma: If the fact that one's perceptual faculties might not be functioning properly isn't a reason for thinking that they aren't, how can there be such a thing as the unfavourable case at all? Alternatively, if the fact that they might not be working properly is itself a reason to think that they aren't working properly, then how can there be such a thing as the favourable case? In other words, why doesn't one need a reason to believe that they are functioning properly in the favourable case just as much as one would in the unfavourable case?

Of course, this is precisely what the present line of thought denies. According to the present suggestion one is warranted in one's perceptual beliefs, unless one has a reason for thinking that one's belief is in fact defeated (i.e. unless one has a reason for thinking that circumstances are such that one can't rely upon one's perceptual faculties). However, the mere fact that one's belief *could* be defeated (i.e. the mere fact that one could have a reason for thinking that circumstances are such that one can't rely upon one's perceptual faculties), is not *itself* a reason for thinking that one's belief is defeated, or that one can't rely upon them. According to this line of thought, there is a difference, at least in the case of perceptual beliefs, between the mere possibility of mistake, and the possession of grounds for thinking that a mistake has been made. Of course, in a way the point of the argument from error is to collapse the distinction between one's having a reason to believe that one's belief is defeated and one's having a reason to think that it could be. And, as we've seen, it's hard to spell out that distinction in practice. But perhaps a proponent of the current line of thought would wish to question what the force of the demand for an explanation of the difference really is. That distinction seems to be a very intuitive one, even if it's hard to spell out more precisely. Cases in which one has good reason to believe that one's belief is defeated (and in which one therefore would need a positive reason to believe that it's not in order to be justified in one's

first order perceptual beliefs) just don't seem epistemically relevant or similar to cases in which one has no such reason and can merely conceive of one's belief being defeated.

Given that according to this line of thought not all doubts about whether one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties count as reasons to think that one can't, one problem is to specify what does and doesn't count as a reason to think that one can't, and what counts as one's being 'neglectful' in not having a warranted belief to the effect that one can't. According to the present proposal what considerations may count as 'undermining' one's entitlement to 'presume' that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties does not depend solely upon the content of the doubts in question but may also be a function of the context, including one's own background knowledge. Perhaps some perceptual experiences are so intrinsically incredible that a responsible subject will think of that itself as a reason to believe that she can't rely upon her perceptual faculties in the circumstances. For instance, if it looks to me as if there's a 30ft orange fish dancing on the table in front of me, perhaps the only reasonable thing for me to believe is that I must be hallucinating. But most cases will be less straightforward. For instance, if a lion bounds down my street in the middle of central London is it more reasonable for me to suspect that I am hallucinating than that there is in fact a lion bounding down my street? Even if that's so in this case, and I think that's doubtful, circumstances could easily have been such that this is not the most reasonable thing for me to believe. For instance, consider the same scenario if I live in rural Kenya, or again in the London case after I've just heard an announcement on the radio that a lion has escaped from the local zoo and is rampaging through the city streets. Again, there is scope for debate about what ought to count as making one 'neglectful' in not having a warranted belief to the effect that my senses can't be relied upon. As McDowell points out:

> If someone arrives at a false belief from which she would have been deterred by some investigation that she choose not to engage in because of it's high costs and low probability of overturning the other evidence, is she blameworthy? Different answers are possible. But no reasonable interpretation of the idea of doxastic obligation could make falsehood in an empirical belief show, all by itself, that an obligation has not been met.(McDowell 1998a: 397).

But perhaps here again one would want to question what the force of the demand for any kind of general explanation is. Moreover, it might be suggested that any inability we have to give such a general account belies our evident ability to make such distinctions in particular cases. In that respect perhaps the concept of an 'undercutters' is no better or worse placed than many familiar epistemic concepts.

8. Defending Default Entitlement

The second major difficulty with the present proposal is to say *why* one should be 'default entitled' to the belief that no circumstances obtain which undermine the use of one's senses. Of course, this can hardly be to ask what one's grounds are for this belief. After all, the whole point of the present proposal is to deny that this is a belief for which one requires grounds. But perhaps some account can and in fact needs to be given of why that should be so. One reason for thinking that is that, whatever we think about the perceptual case, such an entitlement or 'presumption' certainty doesn't seem to be present in the case of other kinds of beliefs. Indeed, if it's a consequence of this view that it is, then this may itself be a decisive objection to that view. For instance, in the case of beliefs held as a result of wishful thinking, it doesn't seem right to say that one is 'entitled' to presume that such beliefs aren't mistaken, unless one has some specific reason to think that they are. In such a case it's surely irrelevant

whether or not I've got any 'positive reason' to think that I'm mistaken. The fact is, I've got no reason to think that I'm not.

In defence of the idea that one is 'default entitled' to the belief that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties, many of its advocates often implicitly appeal to some kind of 'transcendental argument'. In its general form, a transcendental argument starts by assuming that a certain cognitive achievement is actual, and asks what are the conditions under which such an achievement is possible.[36] The basic thought is that given that the achievement is actual, then anything that is stipulated to be a necessary condition for such an achievement to be possible, must also be actual. As applied to the present case the suggestion might be that: perception is itself sometimes a way of gaining knowledge about how things are in the world around one. However, perception would not be such a source of knowledge if, in order to acquire knowledge on the basis of how one's perceptual experience presents things as being, one also always had to have a reason to believe that one's perceptual faculties could be relied upon. Therefore, it's not the case that in order to acquire knowledge on the basis of perception one always needs a reason to believe that one's perceptual faculties can be relied upon. For instance, Burge claims more generally that:

> I believe...that the presumption of normality is a condition of the possibility of the successful exercise of any representational competence. (Burge: forthcoming)

Such a strategy raises various questions which I don't intend to pursue in this context. One thing to note however is that such a strategy is certainly not going to convince anyone who thinks that the achievement in question isn't actual. For instance, such a claim is hardly likely to impress our appearance foundationalist. After all, their point is precisely that

[36] For an account of transcendental arguments along these lines, see Cassam 1999.

perception is not itself a source of knowledge about how the world around one, or at least not in the way that these authors think that it is. Indeed, it is interesting to note that at one point Burge even goes so far as to claim, when writing in connection with an analogous principle that he thinks applies in the case of beliefs acquired by the operation of one's memory, that:

> The justification does not depend on a premise that says that these conditions obtain, a premise that would itself require further justification. (*I think that such a dependence would involve a vicious regress*). (Burge 1993: 463). [italics mine]

Presumably, the appearance foundationalist will hardly be impressed by the complaint that without 'default entitlement' (i.e. if we were not entitled to presume that our perceptual faculties could be relied upon), that there would be a vicious regress! That is exactly *their* point, namely that perceptual beliefs don't stop the regress, but that something needs to. According to the appearance foundationalist, there's no such thing as 'default entitlement' and, moreover, we don't need it given that we've got indefeasibility in the form of appearance beliefs.

Of course in a way the claim that one is 'default entitled' to the belief that one's perceptual faculties are working properly does offer us a 'solution' to the regress - insofar as it simply denies that there is something further in virtue of which in the favourable case one is justified in believing that no circumstances obtain which undermine the use of one's senses. According to that proposal, you are justified in that belief on the basis of no grounds whatsoever, so one can't raise a question about what in turn one's grounds are for that belief and so on and on. But it's not a 'straight' solution to that argument that would convince anyone who's genuinely impressed by that argument. After all, it just denies a premise of that argument, namely that being warranted is always a positive property of a belief i.e. that a belief is only warranted where one has grounds which support it. But perhaps the point of this

response is to highlight that in the case of certain kinds of beliefs, such as certain perceptual beliefs, we don't have to give an entirely straight solution to that argument. As Burge puts it:

> the foregoing explanation of the intuitive basis for perceptual entitlement is not meant in itself to answer scepticism. It does not purport to provide the most global explanation and justification of perceptual entitlement. But it does provide, within the context of a normal scientific and common sense view of the world, a partial but principled explanation of why the perceptual states that in fact do contribute to your entitlement to perceptual beliefs count as contributing to perceptual entitlement. (Burge: forthcoming)

9. Bootstrapping

If one reason for thinking that one doesn't need a reason to believe that one's perceptual faculties are working properly in order to be justified in one's perceptual beliefs, is because one *couldn't* have or acquire a reason for this belief, then one question is whether it's right to think that one couldn't have any such reason. This brings us onto our second response. According to this response, the fact that one is perceiving properly is claimed to justify one's belief that one is. In other words, in certain cases at least, one's source justifies both one's first-order perceptual belief, and one's second-order belief that one's perceptual faculties are functioning properly. Or rather, in justifying you in your first order perceptual belief, your source also thereby justifies you in believing that your source is functioning properly. One way of putting this would be to claim that the knowledge that one is perceiving as opposed to hallucinating is 'on a level with' the knowledge that one acquires by perceiving - which knowledge one does not acquire when one is hallucinating. One way of bringing this out is via the following argument:

That's a pig

If that's a pig, then I'm not hallucinating

Therefore, I'm not hallucinating

The basic idea, then, is that given a doubt about whether one is perceiving properly one can, in certain circumstances at least, appeal to this argument in order to settle one's doubt. One reason for thinking that one's source only justifies one in the higher order belief when one is perceiving properly, is because this argument arguably wouldn't be available to one in the case in which one isn't. Or rather, one would effectively be employing a different form of argument, given that in the case in which one is having an illusion or hallucination, the demonstrative in the first premise would fail to refer (at least on certain influential views about singular terms).

This account is accordingly often associated with Infallibilist accounts and I'll discuss it in connection with that account, although it may also be available to the Fallibilist in some form[37]. For instance, McDowell seems to have some such idea in mind when he writes:

> only if the veil is supposed to be in place can it seem that one would need to establish or equip oneself with good reason to suppose that one is not dreaming before one can be entitled to take one's apparent perception at face value. Once the veil is lifted things can be the other way round. One's good reason to believe that one is not dreaming on the relevant occasion, can reside in all the knowledge of the environment that one's sense are yielding - something that does not happen when one is dreaming.(McDowell 1998a: 408).

The advantage of the Infallibilist Response in the present context is that, given that one's experience is only claimed to warrant one's first-order perceptual belief when one's perceptual faculties are in fact functioning properly, one's second-order belief that one's

[37] See Pryor 2000.

perceptual faculties are functioning properly (and that one is not suffering an illusion or a hallucination), will only be warranted in those cases in which it is in fact true. Indeed, this would also fit in with the worry stated above regarding singular terms.

Unlike the first response, this response doesn't violate the requirement of the regress, or at least not in any straightforward way. After all, it's not as if any belief is held to justify itself, or to be justified without grounds. But such a response presumably does do something which many people think is what makes the regress, or the idea that beliefs don't justify themselves, plausible: namely, the thought that the procedures that one carries out aren't in general self-vindicating. In other words, that there has to be some alternative mode of checking that one has carried out that procedure correctly before one can derive any warrant from the procedure. Indeed, that's presumably why indefeasibility is thought to be a virtue in the context of that argument, given that in the case of indefeasible beliefs there is no way for the procedure whereby one forms such beliefs to go wrong and you not necessarily be able to tell that that is so.

One way that this point is sometimes put is by claiming that the argument in question is 'question-begging'. The basic thought is that such an argument couldn't rationally be used to raise one's confidence in the conclusion. Rather one would *already* need to be justified in believing the argument's conclusion in order to engage in the reasoning (i.e. to be justified in believing the first premise). One problem is that whether an argument is question-begging in this sense doesn't seem to be a straightforward function of the form of an argument. There's certainly nothing invalid about the above argument. Of course according to the Infallibilist the truth of the conclusion is a necessary condition for one to be warranted in believing the

argument's first premise. But it's not clear that that alone renders an argument question-begging or illegitimate. For instance, compare that with the following argument:

I am in pain

If I am in pain, then someone is in pain

Therefore someone is in pain.

The truth of the conclusion of this argument is an necessary condition for me to be warranted in believing the first premise. Furthermore, (assuming I possess all the relevant concepts) I couldn't be justified in believing the first premise, unless I was justified in believing the conclusion, insofar as any reason that I had for denying the conclusion would be a reason for denying the first premise. But it's not clear that this alone renders the argument illegitimate.

A different suggestion might be to claim that it is the assignment of warrants in this argument that makes it question-begging, and that that's why such an argument couldn't rationally be used to raise one's confidence in the conclusion. One way of bringing this out would be to claim that, if one was really doubtful of the conclusion, such an argument would undermine one's warrant for engaging in the relevant reasoning because it would undermine one's warrant for believing the first premise. So one could only employ such an argument if the conclusion were not genuinely in question. But if that's so, then how could such an argument be used to rationally raise one's confidence in the conclusion?

Indeed, it might be claimed that this is precisely what cases of actual defeat make clear. For instance, to borrow an example from Martin[38]; suppose that you're a scientist studying the visual cortex and create a machine that alternates the actual viewing of oranges with perfect hallucinations of oranges, and ask me to participate in your experiment. In such a case, it

[38] Martin 2001: 444-5.

arguably does not seem legitimate for me to appeal to the above argument. In other words, I can't just say, 'well, I can see that that's an orange, and if that's an orange, then I can't be subject to your hallucination machine. So, I can't be subject to your hallucination machine.'

In this case, it seems intelligible that my doubt about whether I am hallucinating would undermine my warrant for my perceptual belief, and it would therefore be illegitimate for me to appeal to such an argument. But why, then, doesn't my doubt about whether I'm hallucinating also undermine my justification for my perceptual belief in the so-called favourable case? In other words, if it's question-begging for me to appeal to such an argument in the unfavourable case, why isn't it equally question-begging for me to employ it in the favourable case? Moreover, I may, in both cases, be believing exactly the same proposition (i.e. 'that's an orange'), on what are objectively exactly the same ground (i.e. on the basis of actually seeing that there's an orange). For instance, suppose that unbeknownst to me your hallucination machine is in fact broken. In such a case, if it looks to me as if there's an orange present, that can only be because there is in fact an orange present and I can see that there is. In this case, it would be no accident that what I believed was true, but my perceptual belief doesn't seem to be justified given the presence of the relevant doubt. Or at least, it's perfectly intelligible that that should be so.

But if that's so, then what exactly is the difference between the favourable and the unfavourable case meant to be, given that it doesn't seem to be a matter of either the particular propositions believed, the doubts in questions, or the grounds upon which my belief is in fact formed? But if there is no difference between these two cases, then why is it any more legitimate to appeal to such an argument in the favourable case, then it is the

unfavourable case? Or to put it somewhat differently, why does my source *ever* justify me in believing that my source is functioning properly, if it doesn't always?

Of course this is precisely what the present line of thought denies. In other words, it denies that it follows from the fact that one sometimes can't justifiably appeal to the argument in question, that one never can. Perhaps a defender of this line of thought will simply insist that if the subject is not warranted in such a case, then it must be because the general properties by means of which the case is specified entail the lack of warrant. And hence, that there must be a difference between this case and the favourable case, and that there is nothing more to be said, by way of general explanation, about why that is so. Indeed, it might be suggested: why isn't it enough to simply point out that, on certain occasions at least, it does seem reasonable to claim that one can appeal to such an argument in order to rule such doubts out, even if there are other cases it which one can't? Indeed, if it's really true that one can't be justified in a perceptual belief unless one has a reason to believe that one's perceptual faculties are functioning properly, then, given that our perceptual beliefs sometimes are justified, it must be the case that we do sometimes have a reason to believe that they are - and it's unclear what other candidates are forthcoming, aside from one's experience itself.

10. Certainty Reconsidered

This brings us back to our earlier discussion of rebutting defeat. According to the present proposal there are certain potential rebutters for one's perceptual beliefs, for instance that 'I'm now hallucinating' or 'my perceptual faculties can't be relied upon', that I can sometimes justifiably rule out. Earlier, I claimed that rebutting defeat could only operate where you have a belief of which you're not certain. So it might seem as if the present proposal is committed to claiming that one can be certain of one's perceptual beliefs. And in

a way that's true, if by certainty one just means that there are certain potential rebutters that one can rule out. But that's not to say that one can be certain of such beliefs in the sense favoured by the appearance foundationalist. After all, it's not true that one *necessarily* treats rebutters for one's beliefs as being false. To use our earlier example, the present response is not committed to denying that if you really were in a situation in which you had good evidence that you were subject to a orange-producing hallucination machine, that you wouldn't be justified in simply ruling out the possibility that you were hallucinating. So even in the favourable case one's beliefs are *subject* to rebutting defeat - in the sense that one can conceive of some potential rebutters such that were you actually to possess them in different epistemic circumstances, then you wouldn't be justified in ignoring them.

This reflects the fact that when the appearance foundationalist talks about certainty and defeat, they are concerned to generalise across different kinds of cases. Their thought is that any situation in which you accept the same proposition on what are in fact objectively the same grounds, is epistemically relevant to an evaluation of whether you're certain of a given belief. So, given that one couldn't rule out these doubts in the unfavourable case, you can't therefore rule them out in the favourable case either. And there does seem to be something right about this - at least as a characterisation of certainty. After all, the notion of certainty does seem to be a modal notion in some sense, or at least to have certain modal implications. To say that I'm certain is to say that I'm not such that I can be corrected, and not merely that, as things currently stand in the present circumstances, I can't be corrected.

But the whole point of the present proposal, and in a way the previous proposal, is to emphasise the extent to which our epistemic plight in the unfavourable case is not necessarily a good guide to our epistemic standing in the favourable case . Of course, if there is any

sense in which one may be certain of one's perceptual beliefs this isn't in the same sense in which, according to the appearance foundationalist at least, one may be certain of one's appearance beliefs. In the case of one's perceptual beliefs it's not that from one's 'certain' knowledge one can tell that it's inconceivable that things are other than you take them to be. Rather, the mere fact that it's conceivable to one in this sense (i.e. in the sense implied by claiming that one's perceptual beliefs are defeasible), that things might be other than one takes them to be, does not have the problematic epistemic consequences that the appearance foundationalist takes it to have. Austin captures the tension here well when he writes:

> Yes, but it may be said that even if such cautious formulae are not *intrinsically* incorrigible, surely there will be plenty of cases in which what we say by their utterance will *in fact* be incorrigible - cases in which, that is to say, nothing whatever could actually be produced as a cogent ground for retracting them...For if, when I make some statement, it is true that nothing whatever could in fact be produced as a cogent ground for retracting it, this can only be because I am in, have got myself into, the very best possible position for making that statement- I have and am entitled to have, *complete* confidence in it when I make it. But whether this is so or not is not a matter of what kind of sentence I use in making my statement, but of *what the circumstances are* in which I make it...if I watch for some time an animal a few feet in front of me, in good light, if I prod it perhaps, sniff, and take note of the noises it makes, I may say 'That's a pig'; and this too will be 'incorrigible', nothing could be produced that would show that I had made a mistake...when they are made the circumstances are such that they are quite certainly, definitely, and unretractably *true*. (Austin 1962: 114-5)

11. Conclusion

According to the naïve view that we began with, our perceptual experiences directly warrant our perceptual beliefs. The two responses that I have looked at offer us different ways of holding onto that view, and I hope to have explained how that is so. But they're not responses that would satisfy our appearance foundationalist; one doesn't have a reason to believe that one can rely upon one's perceptual faculties in the sense in which the appearance foundationalist demands. They are *responses* to the problems that we have been looking at, but they're not straight *solutions* to those problems. They do not offer us a non-question-begging demonstration of how perception can be, on occasion at least, a potential source of knowledge about the world around us, on terms which proponents of these arguments would accept.

In a way, therefore, our discussion provides a conditional defence of appearance foundationalism. Given the assumptions which that position accepts, it is right to think that there's no such thing as distinctively perceptual warrant. So either there is no such thing as perceptual warrant, or we must reject the assumptions that lead to that conclusion. The two responses that I have looked at do so in different ways. The problem, of course, is that these assumptions are not without their own appeal. As we've seen, it's hard to say what exactly is wrong with them. But these assumptions lead to an equally counterintuitive consequence, namely, that there is no such thing as perceptual warrant. Perhaps it is at this stage that the idea that the naïve view essentially is a *naïve* view has some force. For our intuitive conviction that there is such a thing as distinctively perceptual warrant is surely greater than our confidence that the arguments we've been looking at spell out the right way to think about the structure of justification.

REFERENCES

Austin, J. L. (1962), Sense and Sensibilia (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Ayer, A. J. (1969), The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge (London: Macmillan).

Ayers, M. R. (1991), Locke: vol. 1: Epistemology (London: Routledge).

BonJour, L. (1985), The Structure of Empirical Knowledge (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

Burge, T. (1993), 'Content Preservation', Philosophical Review, 102.

Burge, T. (forthcoming), 'Perceptual Entitlement', Philosophy and Phenomenological Research.

Cassam, Q. (1999), 'Self-Directed Transcendental Arguments', in R. Stern (ed.) Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Chisholm, R. M. (1966), Theory of Knowledge (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.)

Chisholm, R. M. (1982), The Foundations of Knowing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Dancy, J. (1985), An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Goldman, A. (1986), Epistemology and Cognition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press)

Haack, S. (1993), Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology (Oxford: Blackwell).

Lewis, C. I. (1946), An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court).

Lewis, C. I. (1952), 'The Given Element in Empirical Knowledge', Philosophical Review, 61.

Martin, M. G. F. (1993), 'The Rational Role of Experience', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 93.

Martin, M. G. F. (1998), 'Perception, Concepts and Memory', Philosophical Review, 107.

Martin, M. G. F. (2001), 'Epistemic Openness and Perceptual Defeasibility', Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, LXIII.

McDowell, J. (1998a), 'Knowledge and the Internal', in Meaning, Knowledge and Reality (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

McDowell, J. (1998b), 'Knowledge by Hearsay', in Meaning, Knowledge and Reality (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

Peacocke, C. (1983), Sense and Content: Experience, Thought and their Relations (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Pollock, J. (1986), Contemporary Theories of Knowledge (Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.).

Pryor, J. (2000), 'The Skeptic and the Dogmatist', Nous, 34.

Sainsbury, M. (1997), 'Easy Possibilities', Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, LVII.

Snowdon, P. F. (1988), 'Perception, Vision and Causation', in J. Dancy (ed.) Perceptual Knowledge (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Strawson, P. F. (1988), 'Perception and its Objects', in J. Dancy (ed.) Perceptual Knowledge (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Williams, B. (1978), Descartes: the Project of Pure Enquiry (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

Williamson, T. (1995), 'Is Knowing a State of Mind?', Mind, 104.

Williamson, T. (2000), Knowledge and its Limits (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Wright, C. (1991), 'Imploding the Demon', Mind 100.