

Experience and Epistemic Structure: Can Cognitive Penetration Result in Epistemic Downgrade?ⁱ

Abstract: Reflection on the possibility of cases in which experience is cognitively penetrated has suggested to many that an experience's etiology can reduce its capacity to provide prima facie justification for believing its content below a baseline. This is epistemic downgrade due to etiology, and its possibility is incompatible with phenomenal conservatism. I develop a view that explains the epistemic deficiency in certain possible cases of cognitive penetration but on which there is no epistemic downgrading below a baseline and on which etiology plays no explanatory role. This view is not phenomenal conservatism exactly, but it does capture what's right about phenomenal conservatism.

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Part of understanding the nature of inference is knowing which mental states can be conclusions of inferences. There are some clear cases. Beliefs can be conclusions of inferences. Headaches cannot be conclusions of inferences. If working through a lengthy bit of reasoning gives you a headache, then your headache is caused by an inference, but it is not the conclusion of an inference. Between beliefs and headaches there are a range of cases that are less clear. Perceptual experiences (from now on just “experiences”) are, or at least have become, one such case.

The orthodox view is that experiences cannot be conclusions of inferences. This is often expressed indirectly in terms of passivity or immunity to rational evaluation. For example, according to John McDowell in having experiences “a subject is passively saddled with conceptual contents,” and according to Ernie Sosa “since they are only passively received, they cannot manifest obedience to anything, including rational norms, whether epistemic or otherwise” (McDowell, 1996, p. 31; Sosa, 2007, p. 46). Conclusions of inferences are drawn—not the result of passive saddling—and they do manifest obedience to rational norms. McDowell and Sosa indirectly express the view that experiences cannot be conclusions of inferences.

In her recent book, *The Rationality of Perception* (2017), Susanna Siegel challenges orthodoxy. She defends the view that experiences can be conclusions of inferences. Central to her defense of this view is her interpretation of what she calls “core cases of hijacked experiences,” among which is the following:

Anger: Before seeing Jack, Jill fears that Jack is angry at her. When she sees him, her fear causes her to have a visual experience in which he looks angry to her. She goes on to believe that he is angry. (Siegel, 2017, p. 67)

Siegel's interpretation of Anger and other core cases of hijacked experience goes like this. There is a baseline of epistemic support for believing that Jack is angry associated with Jill's visual

experience as of Jack being angry. But because Jill's experience is caused by her unfounded fear, the epistemic support it gives to her for believing that Jack is angry falls below this baseline. And the mechanism by which this epistemic support falls below the baseline is not epistemic defeat. That is, Jill's experience doesn't prima facie justify her in believing that Jack is angry, which prima facie justification is then defeated by some other considerations. Rather, the mechanism by which Jill's experience justifies below its baseline is epistemic downgrade. An epistemically downgraded experience is one that has a reduced capacity to even prima facie justify belief. Putting all this together yields the Downgrade Thesis:

Downgrade Thesis: The core cases of hijacked experiences do not prima facie justify their subjects in believing their hijacked contents because their capacity to provide prima facie justification for believing those contents falls below a baseline.ⁱⁱ

The Downgrade Thesis raises an explanatory question: what is this downgrading mechanism that changes the epistemic properties of experiences? Siegel's elegant answer is that it is just plain old inference: downgraded experiences are conclusions of bad inferences. Believing on the basis of a downgraded experience is like relying on a belief that is the conclusion of a bad inference. The attractions of such an explanation of the Downgrade Thesis constitute Siegel's main positive case in favor of the view that experiences can be conclusions of inference.

Aside from its role in Siegel's case for thinking that experiences can be conclusions of inference, the Downgrade Thesis has come to occupy an independent and central place in recent theorizing about perceptual justification, both by Siegel and others. It is important to distinguish the Downgrade Thesis from some closely related theses. First, there is what I will call the Deficiency Thesis:

Deficiency Thesis: The core cases of hijacked experiences do not prima facie justify their subjects in believing their hijacked contents.

The Deficiency Thesis agrees with the Downgrade Thesis that the core cases of hijacked experiences do not prima facie justify their subjects in believing their hijacked contents, but it doesn't commit to there being any downgrading below an epistemic baseline. Second, both the Downgrade Thesis and the Deficiency Thesis should be distinguished from various proposed explanations of the supposed epistemic downgrade or deficiency. Current proposals differ among each other along a number of different dimensions, but many are committed to what I'll call the Etiological Thesis:

Etiological Thesis: The core cases of hijacked experiences are epistemically downgraded or deficient because of how they are formed.

Siegel's view that downgraded perceptual experiences are conclusions of bad inferences is just one kind of etiological view. I mention some others from the literature below. The Etiological Thesis itself can seem quite natural: surely what's wrong with hijacked experiences is that they are hijacked and that is a matter of how they are formed. More on why I do not think this is quite right later.

Siegel's core cases of hijacked experiences are imaginary, and it is an open empirical question whether there are any real correlates to them.ⁱⁱⁱ But the Downgrade Thesis and the Deficiency Thesis command philosophical interest independently of how the empirical question is settled. They do so because their truth about even merely possible cases has implications for theories about the nature of perceptual justification. Consider Phenomenal Conservatism, which, for present purposes, we can simply formulate as follows:

Phenomenal Conservatism: If you have an experience as of it being the case that p, then you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that p.

As I interpret it Phenomenal Conservatism is supposed to be metaphysically necessary.^{iv} It holds in virtue of the natures of experiences and justification. So if the Downgrade Thesis or even just the Deficiency Thesis is true, then Phenomenal Conservatism is false because then the core cases of hijacked experiences constitute counterexamples to it. Because Phenomenal Conservatism is supposed to be metaphysically necessary the counterexamples do not need to be or to correlate with actual cases to be effective. Aside from implying that the Downgrade Thesis or the Deficiency Thesis is true, the Etiological Thesis is in additional conflict with Phenomenal Conservatism since Phenomenal Conservatism does not accord any epistemic weight to the causal histories of experiences.

In my view there is much that is right about Phenomenal Conservatism. My aim in this paper is to set out a picture of perceptual justification that captures what I think is right about Phenomenal Conservatism and explore its implications for the Deficiency Thesis, the Downgrade Thesis, and the Etiological Thesis. What I will argue is that the Deficiency Thesis is true, but the Downgrade Thesis and the Etiological Thesis are false. Of course it is easy to have such a view by having the view that experiences as of it being the case that p never prima justify their subjects in believing that p. But that is not my view, since that is not a view that captures what is right about Phenomenal Conservatism.

What's Right About Phenomenal Conservatism

Phenomenal Conservatism is often combined with a certain view about what it is in virtue of which experiences prima facie justify their subjects in believing their contents. This is what I will call the Phenomenal Grounding view:

Phenomenal Grounding: If an experience as of it being the case that *p* prima facie justifies you in believing that *p*, then it does so because of its phenomenology.

In this paper I am going to assume that Phenomenal Grounding is true.

Phenomenal Conservatism is an unrestricted thesis. It implies that *whenever* you have an experience as of it being the case that *p*, you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that *p*. Some philosophers such as Huemer (2001) and Tucker (2010) accept this. It is possible, however, to develop forms of phenomenal conservatism that restrict when experiences prima facie justify their subjects in believing their contents. The general form of such views is the following:

Restricted Conservatism: If, and only if, you have an experience as of it being the case that *p* and condition *C* is met, then you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that *p*.

Condition *C* might include conditions that have to be present for the phenomenology of an experience to make it a prima facie justifier (enablers) or conditions that have to be absent for the phenomenology of an experience to make it a prima facie justifier (absence of disablers). The distinction invoked here can be found in ordinary reasoning about causation (cf. Cheng and Novick 1991; Cummins 1995, from which the following example is taken). Pressing on its brake pad causes a car to decelerate. An enabling condition for this is that the brake pad be connected to the brakes. Suppose however you press on the brake pad and the brake pad is connected to the brakes, but there is ice on the road. The presence of ice on the road disables pressing on the brake pad from causing the car to decelerate, but, surface level consideration of the situation might suggest, it does not do so by taking away something that has to be present for pressing on the brake pad to cause the car to decelerate.

The reason I call attention to this distinction is that it helps locate a choice point in developing Restricted Conservatism with respect to the Downgrade Thesis. Suppose you endorsed Phenomenal Grounding and Restricted Conservatism and took condition *C* to be the absence of a disabler, say the condition of not being a core case of hijacked experience. Then the Downgrade Thesis follows. Consider a core case of hijacked experience. Given Phenomenal Grounding and its unhijacked counterpart we can find an epistemic baseline. But given the current form of Restricted Conservatism and the fact that it is hijacked we can see that the experience's capacity to prima facie justify its hijacked content falls below that baseline. Siegel's view fits this pattern, as does Lu Teng's (2016). Suppose, however, you didn't take condition *C* to be the absence of a disabler, but at most the presence of an enabler, which enabler was absent in the core cases of hijacked experience. Then even though those hijacked experiences fail to prima facie justify believing their hijacked contents, this is not because their capacity to do so falls below a baseline. That is, the Deficiency Thesis might be true without the Downgrade Thesis being true.

Suppose we accept Restricted Conservatism and we take condition C to be the presence of an enabler. Let's consider another choice point. Is the enabler a condition on the experience's essential properties or on the experience's accidental properties?^v One example of an essential property is the experience's phenomenology. Focusing on phenomenology yields:

Phenomenally Restricted Conservatism: If, and only if, you have an experience as of it being the case that p and phenomenal condition C is met, then you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that p.

Another example of an essential property is the experience's content. Jim Pryor (2000) and Matthew McGrath (2016) develop forms of Restricted Conservatism in which the restriction is on content.^{vi} The most relevant accidental property for the present discussion is the experience's etiology. Focusing on etiology yields:

Etiologically Restricted Conservatism: If, and only if, you have an experience as of it being the case that p and etiological condition C is met, then you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that p.

Berit Brogaard (2013), Peter Marke (2013), and, in earlier work, McGrath (2013) again develop forms of Etiologically Restricted Conservatism.^{vii} If Etiologically Restricted Conservatism is true and the core cases of hijacked experiences have an improper etiology, then the Etiological Thesis is true. Specifically, the core cases of hijacked experiences are epistemically *deficient* because of how they are formed. Note deficient, not downgraded. We have already removed the idea of a baseline by focusing on enablers rather than the absence of disablers. If one endorses Phenomenally Restricted Conservatism rather than Etiologically Restricted Conservatism, however, then the Etiological Thesis is not true.

In a number of places--the earliest being (2011), the most explicit being (2016)--I have defended a form of Phenomenally Restricted Conservatism, which here I'll call Presentational Conservatism:

Presentational Conservatism: If, and only if, you have an experience that has presentational phenomenology with respect to p, then you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that p.

This counts as a form of Phenomenally Restricted Conservatism because experiences do not have presentational phenomenology with respect to all of their contents. Not everyone uses the term "presentational phenomenology" so that this comes out true, but that is how I've used it in the past and will continue to use it here. To see what I have in mind consider the kind of experience you would have when presented with a scenario like the one depicted below:

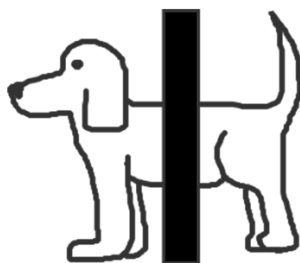


Figure 1: Occluded Dog

You see a dog; you see the rightward part of the dog; you see the leftward part of the dog; but you do not see the middle of the dog, since it is occluded by a bar. These facts about what you see are reflected in the phenomenology of your experience: your experience is also *as of* seeing a dog, seeing its rightward part, seeing its leftward part, but not seeing its middle, since it is occluded by a bar. Though you do not see, and do not have an experience as of seeing, the dog's middle you do represent it. Your experience represents the middle of the dog as having a shape and color appropriate to the dog's seen, and represented, rightward and leftward parts. What constitutes appropriateness and how your perceptual system generates such an experience absent the light array hitting your retina containing information about the shape and color of the dog's middle are good questions. But for now I just want to highlight that your experience would be how I've described.

As I understand the notion of presentational phenomenology we should say the following. Your experience of the partly occluded dog has presentational phenomenology with respect to propositions about the dog's rightward and leftward parts, and even with respect to the whole dog. In having the experience you do not just represent these propositions as being true, but your experience is also felt as making you aware of the bits of reality they are about. This is true of propositions about the whole dog even though you do not see the dog's middle because you can be aware of a whole without being aware of all of its parts. On the other hand we should say that your experience of the partly occluded dog lacks presentational phenomenology with respect to propositions about the dog's middle. In having the experience you do represent these propositions as being true, but your experience is not also felt as making you aware of the bits of reality they are about, i.e. the dog's middle, which cannot be seen because it is occluded.

Presentational Conservatism accords epistemic weight to this phenomenal difference that the contents of experience can manifest. According to Presentational Conservatism it is only those contents with respect to which an experience has presentational phenomenology that it *prima facie* justifies on its own, that is, immediately. If it justifies other contents, then it does so mediately. That the justification is mediate does not mean that it is remote or difficult to attain. Your experience of the partly occluded dog, for example, justifies you in believing various things about the dog's middle both because they are made likely by the propositions about the dog's rightward and leftward parts that it immediately justifies, and even entailed by some of the propositions about the whole dog that it immediately justifies.

Elsewhere I've motivated Presentational Conservatism by its capacity to explain certain patterns in epistemic judgments about cases (Chudnoff 2016). Michael Veber suggested another such case to me. Suppose you wonder whether the occluded part of the dog is different from how your perceptual experience represents it due to amodal completion. Suppose, for example, you wonder whether the dog has a bump on the part of its back that is occluded. You couldn't justifiably form the opinion that it does not have such a bump simply because your perceptual experience represents its body as continuing behind the occluder in a regular way rather than in a bumpy way. A good explanation for this runs as follows: your experience does not immediately justify beliefs about the occluded parts; rather it mediately justifies beliefs about the occluded parts; in the context of your inquiry, however, you bracket the background information that would usually allow you to justifiably form beliefs about the occluded parts of the dog, since your inquiry is motivated by a question--does the dog have a bump?--that calls for independently checking the applicability of this background information.

Aside from what it can explain about patterns in epistemic judgments about cases I think that Presentational Conservatism has some intrinsic plausibility. Compare seeing that the dog has a tail, receiving testimony that the dog has a tail, and inferring that the dog has a tail from knowledge of its breed. If you believe on the basis of testimony you have to rely on someone else for your information. If you believe on the basis of inference you have to piece together your conclusion from other things you know. But if you believe on the basis of sight you do not have to do any of these things because you can just point to the state of affairs itself. It is right there before you. It is presented for your inspection. This contrast suggests that your experience on its own suffices to justify you in believing that the dog has a tail. Now compare seeing the dog as having a white middle (albeit an occluded one), receiving testimony that the dog has a white middle, and inferring that the dog has a white middle. Here I think we fail to find a similar contrast. If you believe on the basis of how your visual experience represents the dog you do not have to rely on someone *else* or *explicitly* piece together other information about the dog. But you do have to trust that your own visual system is automatically piecing together information about the dog in a reliable way. Of course you also have to trust your visual system when you seem to see the dog's tail. But there is a difference. When you seem to see the dog's tail you have to trust that your visual system is accurately presenting it for your inspection. When you have an experience as of the dog's occluded middle being white the trust you put in your visual system is not that it is accurately presenting the middle for your inspection. Rather you trust that your visual system is reliably filling in details you can't inspect for yourself. Compare trusting that someone is showing you something without distortion and trusting that someone is telling you the truth about something. So even though you can form the belief that the dog has a white middle just by taking your experience at face value, when you do so you are implicitly relying on more than what the experience on its own provides for you. A natural way to capture this is to say that your experience on its own does not suffice to justify you in believing that the dog has a white middle. Presentational Conservatism generalizes the foregoing observations.

One might raise worries about Presentational Conservatism from two directions. One might argue that having presentational phenomenology is not a sufficient condition for prima facie justifying believing *p*. Reflection on the core cases of hijacked experience might suggest this worry. I will argue that this is not so in the next section. Alternatively one might argue that having presentational phenomenology is not a necessary condition for prima facie justifying believing *p*. Maybe we should treat presented and unpresented contents as epistemically on par. One motivation for this thought derives from the threat of skepticism: do we really have the supplementary background information required for having justified beliefs in the unpresented contents of our experiences? This depends on the scope of presentational phenomenology and the extent of our background information about the world. I've addressed some aspects of the skeptical worry and these related issues elsewhere (Chudnoff 2016, 2017). Here I set these concerns aside to focus on what we should say about the core cases of hijacked experience.

Explaining Epistemic Deficiency

The core cases of hijacked experience are under described. Consider the anger case again:

Anger: Before seeing Jack, Jill fears that Jack is angry at her. When she sees him, her fear causes her to have a visual experience in which he looks angry to her. She goes on to believe that he is angry. (Siegel 2017, 67)

This description can fit two sorts of case. Let us suppose that Jack's face actually looks like this:



Figure 2: Jack's Face

Well, really no one's face looks like that. I am simplifying, but nothing will hinge on it. The purpose of the simplification, the reason I didn't use pictures of real faces, is that the simplification will allow easy description of the contents of Jill's experience of Jack. If Jill were experiencing normally he would look to have two horizontal eyes and a horizontal mouth and to not be angry. But Jill's fear hijacks her experience. What happens because of that? Here are two possibilities. First, Jack continues to look to have two horizontal eyes and a horizontal mouth but, in this case, to be angry. In this case Jill's fear hijacks the high level content of her experience but not the low level content of her experience. Second, Jack now looks to have two slanted eyes and a frowning mouth and to be angry. In this case Jill's fear hijacks both the high

level content of her experience and the low level content of her experience. Here are pictures corresponding to the two cases:



Figure 3: Just High



Figure 4: High + Low

The other descriptions of the core cases of hijacked experience also admit these different interpretations. I will not make a case for that here, but I think it is pretty obvious when you go through them.^{viii} I will continue to take the Anger case as representative.

So which kind of case does Siegel have in mind--Just High or High + Low? Before saying something about that I want to say which sort of case reading her discussions of the Anger case brought to *my* mind. They brought to my mind the Just High case, and when they brought this case to my mind I shared her epistemic judgment about it: Jill's experience doesn't justify her in thinking that Jack is angry. If this is how to read the Anger case, and also how to read the other core cases of hijacked experience, then I believe the Epistemic Deficiency thesis. It is something that needs to be explained. As noted in the previous section, however, that does not commit me to the Epistemic Downgrade thesis or the Etiological Thesis.

I also think Siegel has the Just High cases in mind when she's discussing the core cases of hijacked experience. She says that experiences are hijacked with respect to specific contents. And when she discusses the Anger case she says that Jill's fear hijacks her experience with respect to the content that Jack is angry. She doesn't say that Jill's fear also hijacks her experience with respect to low level features such as the orientations of Jack's eyes and the shape of Jack's mouth. In fact she says Jack looks to Jill to have a blank stare (Siegel 2017, pg. 118). So I'm inclined to interpret her as having in mind the Just High Anger case when she discusses the Anger case and the corresponding Just High cases when she discusses other core cases of hijacked experience. And I'm also inclined to think these are the cases that her discussions bring to the mind's of most of her readers. And so we all think about the Just High cases and we all share the epistemic judgments motivating at least the Epistemic Deficiency thesis.

But I might be idiosyncratic. Maybe everyone else is really interested in the High + Low Anger case and the corresponding High + Low versions of the other core cases of hijacked experience. Here's one reason I'd find this odd. If it were so, and everyone is also going along with the idea that Jill's experience is at least epistemically deficient with respect to its hijacked contents, then everyone should also be worried about explaining why her experience fails to justify her in believing that Jack's eyes are slanted and Jack's mouth is frowning. But no one

seems to worry about that. Nonetheless, I might just be misreading the situation. If that is true, if Siegel along with everyone other than me clearly has the High + Low cases in mind and is making epistemic judgments about *those* cases, then I disagree with their epistemic judgments and I disagree with the Epistemic Deficiency thesis they are supposed to motivate, and so I see no need to explain how it might be true.

Here are two claims summarizing the foregoing. If the core cases of hijacked experience are Just High cases, then the Epistemic Deficiency thesis may be true. If the core cases of hijacked experience are High + Low cases, then the Epistemic Deficiency thesis is not true. I believe both of these claims. But I will not try to argue for them. Our epistemic judgments about cases are typically taken as rock bottom in present discussions of cognitive penetration and perceptual justification. They should be explained, but they needn't be argued for. I will follow this trend here. My aim in the balance of the section is to say how someone committed to Presentational Conservatism might explain Epistemic Deficiency on the assumption that the core cases of hijacked experience are Just High cases.

Consider Jill's experience of Jack's face in the Just High version of the Anger case. It has two representational contents:

- (a) Jack's eyes are horizontal, as is his mouth.
- (b) Jack is angry.

Jill's experience doesn't justify her in believing (b). Why? Here's the story I think the presentational conservative should tell.

Jill's experience immediately justifies her in believing (a) because it is both represented and presented; Jill's experience doesn't immediately justify her in believing (b) because though represented it isn't presented; Jill's experience would mediate justify her in believing (b) if she had reason to think that if (a) is true then (b) is true; but she doesn't; so it doesn't.

The main premise in this reasoning, after the assumption of Presentational Conservatism, is the claim that Jill's experience represents but does not present that Jack is angry. It does not have presentational phenomenology with respect to the proposition that Jack is angry. I think this premise is plausible. For her experience to have presentational phenomenology with respect to the proposition that Jack is angry her experience would have to have phenomenology reflective of seeing Jack's anger. But were Jack really angry, his anger would be a mental state of his, and mental states are not visible. Some philosophers say things that suggest they think mental states are visible. I find this claim difficult to believe. Mental states do not reflect light. *Expressions* of mental states do reflect light, however, and these are visible. This suggests considering another case.

Suppose because of her fear Jill has an experience that represents the following:

- (a) Jack's eyes are horizontal, as is his mouth.
- (b) Jack's eyes and mouth express anger

One might take this case to challenge the presentational conservative explanation of epistemic deficiency. For one might think that this alternative case is another case in which a hijacked experience is epistemically deficient, but in which a key ingredient in the presentational conservative's explanatory strategy is missing. For in this case we may say that Jill's experience has presentational phenomenology with respect to (b). As I've already conceded, expressions of anger are visible and plausibly there is phenomenology reflective of seeing an expression of anger.^{ix}

Here's my reply. There is indeed something epistemically amiss in this alternative case, but it is not quite epistemic deficiency. I'll name the epistemic trouble in a moment, but first here's the presentational conservative explanation of it. Jill's experience immediately justifies her in believing (a) because it is both represented and presented; Jill's experience immediately justifies her in believing (b) because it is both represented and presented; but Jill's justification for believing (a) defeats Jill's justification for believing (b) because she knows that if (a) is true, then (b) is not true--she knows what expressions of anger look like. So the epistemic trouble is the familiar phenomenon of epistemic defeat. Though Jill's experience *prima facie* justifies her in believing that Jack's eyes and mouth express anger, all things considered Jill does not have justification for believing that Jack's eyes and mouth express anger because she has justification for thinking that Jack's eyes are horizontal, as is his mouth and she knows that horizontal eyes and mouth do not express anger.^x

One might wonder why the defeat doesn't go the other way: why doesn't her justification for believing (b) and her knowledge that if (a), then not (b) constitute a defeater of her justification for believing (a)? We have run into another problem of under description. I have been imagining Jill's experience so that though it immediately justifies both (a) and (b), the justification it provides for believing (a) is stronger than the justification it provides for believing (b). I've been imagining that Jack's eyes and mouth clearly stand out as horizontal. But maybe Jill's experience of Jack's facial features is a bit wobbly. Suppose that if we tried to draw how the low level features of Jack's eyes and mouth show up in Jill's experience then we would have to draw something like this:



Figure 5: Wobbly Face

Let us suppose further that the representational contents of Jill's wobbly experience of Jack's face are the following:

- (a)
 - (i) Jack's eyes and mouth are horizontal, or
 - .
 - .
 - .
 - (ii) Jack's eyes slant and his mouth bends downward.
- (b) Jack's eyes and mouth express anger.

The disjunctive content under (a) captures the wobbly aspect of Jill's experience. The idea is that Jill's experience of Jack's eyes and mouth is compatible with Jack's eyes and mouth having a range of determinate shapes that goes from eyes and mouth being horizontal to eyes slanting and mouth bending downward. If her experience is only so wobbly that it is compatible with Jack's eyes and mouth being horizontal-ish then the case could be treated as above. If her experience is only so wobbly that it is compatible with Jack's eyes being slanted-ish and mouth bending downward-ish then there is no epistemic defeat to explain.^{xi}

Now let us assume for the moment that Jill's wobbly experience has presentational phenomenology with respect to (b) and so prima facie justifies Jill in believing (b). It is implausible that Jill's justification for believing (a.i) defeats her prima facie justification for believing (b). Either her experience does not provide any justification for believing (a.i) or it does and it is weak justification because it derives from justification for believing the disjunction of (a.i)...(a.ii), etc. So Jill might retain all things considered justification for believing (b). But, one might now challenge me, doesn't (b) justify believing that Jack is angry and so ultimately the presentational conservative has to say that Jill does gain justification for thinking Jack is angry through fearful seeing?

The problem in this line of reasoning is the starting assumption that Jill's wobbly experience has presentational phenomenology with respect to (b). A facial expression is in part an arrangement of facial features. I do not see how an experience can be felt as making one aware of a facial expression without at least constraining the arrangement of facial features to within one expression appropriate cluster or options. Compare experiencing an octagon. You might have a wobbly experience of an octagon, and indeed a wobbly experience that is felt as making you aware of an octagon. But you couldn't have an experience that is both so wobbly as to leave open the number of sides a figure has and that is felt as making you aware of an octagon. This is not to say that such an experience couldn't represent the seen figure as being an octagon. My point is not about representational content. It is about presentational phenomenology.

Non-Core Cases of Hijacked Experience

So far I've focused on core cases of hijacked experience, taking Anger as my representative example. I believe what I have said about Anger generalizes to all the core cases.

But there are also non-core cases of hijacked experience, one of which figures prominently in recent discussions of the existence, nature, and significance of cognitive penetration. It is:

Banana: Due to one's true and well-founded belief that bananas are yellow, a gray banana looks yellow. (Siegel 2017, pg 121. See also MacPherson 2012; Deroy 2013; Teng 2016; Brogaard and Gatzia 2017)

I call this a non-core case of hijacked experience for four reasons. First, the terminology of "core cases" vs. "non-core cases" comes from Siegel (2017) and Banana is not on the list of core cases of hijacked experience that Siegel gives on page 67 of *The Rationality of Perception*. Second, this is not arbitrary; there is a good explanation for the exclusion. The explanation, I believe, is that all of the other cases are cases in which high level contents--about mental states, natural kinds, and artifactual kinds--are hijacked but Banana is a case in which low level content--about color--is hijacked. Third, and consequent on the second reason, the Banana case does not admit of the two interpretations I distinguished. There is no Just High Banana case and there is no High + Low Banana case. There is only a Just Low Banana case. Fourth, the epistemic claim Siegel makes about Banana is rather different from the epistemic claims she makes about the other cases of hijacked experience. This will take some explanation.

Consider the Anger case again. Siegel's claim is that Jill's experience both represents Jack as angry and fails to justify her in believing that Jack is angry. Now take the Banana case. The corresponding claim would be that one's experience both represents the banana as yellow and fails to justify believing that the banana is yellow. But this is *not* the claim that Siegel makes. What she says is that one's experience both represents the banana as yellow and fails to justify believing that bananas--bananas in general--are yellow (Siegel 2017, pg. 110). So one's experience in the banana case does immediately justify believing its own content--that the seen banana is yellow. Siegel's novel epistemic claim about it is that it does not mediate justify believing another content--that bananas in general are yellow.

Siegel's novel epistemic claim about the Banana case is not inconsistent with Presentational Conservatism, nor even unrestricted Phenomenal Conservatism. But I am inclined to disagree with the novel epistemic claim too.

Siegel's claim that one's experience in Banana does not mediate justify believing that bananas in general are yellow depends on her view that experiences can be conclusions of inference and function like beliefs in reasoning. Everyone thinks that what counts as good reasoning starting from a belief depends in part on the nature of the reasoning that resulted in the belief. Siegel thinks that what counts as good reasoning starting from an experience also depends in part on the nature of the reasoning that resulted in the experience. According to her explanation of the hijacking that goes on in Banana, you reason from the claim that bananas are yellow to the Banana experience that this seen banana is yellow, and so if you reason from the Banana experience that this seen banana is yellow to the claim that bananas are yellow you would be reasoning in a circle. Reasoning in a circle cannot generate justification. So the Banana

experience that this seen banana is yellow does not mediately justify believing that bananas in general are yellow.

This story about the Banana experience wheels in a number of contentious elements of Siegel's overall view. The most important are (1) that experiences result from reasoning, i.e. can be the conclusions of inference, and (2) that experiences do not have special features that make reasoning starting from them independent of the reasoning--granting (1)--that resulted in them. I think that both claims are false. Suppose (1) is true. Still (2) seems false to me because it ignores the presentational phenomenology of experience. Even if experiences result from reasoning their epistemic capacities, in my view, derive from their presentational phenomenology, not from their basis in reasoning.

Further, as already noted above Siegel's main argument in favor of (1) is that it fits into an elegant framework within which to explain the Downgrade Thesis. That is, she starts with the core cases of hijacked experience and formulates the Downgrade Thesis, then she develops a framework that includes (1) to explain the Downgrade Thesis, and then in light of that framework she supports the novel epistemic judgment about the non-core Banana case. But I have given reasons to think the Downgrade Thesis is not supported by the core cases of hijacked experience and should be rejected. So there is no need for a framework including (1) to explain it, and so there is no reason to accept the novel epistemic claim about the Banana case. There would be a problem for Presentational Conservatism if the Banana case were an instance of epistemic downgrade or even epistemic deficiency. That is, if one's experience of the banana in the Banana case doesn't prima facie justify one in believing that the seen banana is yellow, then the Banana case is a counterexample to Presentational Conservatism. But I think Siegel's decision to treat the Banana case differently is well-founded. If a gray banana looks yellow to you, then you have prima facie justification for thinking that it is yellow. One cannot draw any contrary epistemic conclusions about the case from the mere fact that the banana looks yellow to you in part because you believe that bananas are yellow. One would need some further specification of just how the belief is influencing the experience and one would need some reason to think that this sort of influence can result in epistemic downgrade or epistemic deficiency. Why not think of the belief as just one among many other epistemically irrelevant causal influences on the experience? Lu Teng (2016) tries to answer this question, but she does so in a way that seems to me to be inconsistent with the Phenomenal Grounding assumption.

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ⁱ Thanks to Bence Nanay, Berit Brogaard, Anders Nes, Ram Neta, Michael Veber and the participants in the Southeastern Epistemology Conference for helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper.

ⁱⁱ Siegel's preferred formulation is: "The core cases of hijacked experiences are epistemically downgraded in forward-looking power, without defeat" (Siegel 2017, pg. 67). Siegel has reasons for introducing the novel terminology, but I will use the familiar terminology in my formulation. It is sufficient for present purposes and it makes it easier to locate the present discussion relative to the existing literature on perceptual justification. Further, I have also introduced a simplification. I am, in formulating the thesis, ignoring degrees of justification. With reference to the Anger case, for example, I am taking the baseline to be providing some *prima facie* justification for thinking Jack is angry and the downgraded status to be providing no *prima facie* justification for thinking Jack is angry. Issues concerning degrees of justification will enter into the discussion later.

ⁱⁱⁱ See (Firestone and Scholl 2016) and commentary for discussion. They argue for a negative answer. Many but not all of their commentators argue for a positive answer.

^{iv} Thanks to Anders Nes for suggesting I clarify this point.

^v Ram Neta helpfully pointed out to me that the distinction between essential and accidental properties will not cut where I want it to given certain substantive views about the nature of experience. For example one might think that some contents of experience, Russellian contents say, are not essential to them, or one might adopt a form of naive realism on which causal origination in a particular object is essential to an experience. I will not try to develop a more adequate principle of classification here.

^{vi} McGrath restricts to contents about the looks of things. Pryor restricts to what he calls basic contents: these are contents an experience has but not in virtue of other contents.

^{vii} Brogaard distinguishes between seemings and sensations and endorses an etiologically restricted conservatism in which the restriction is to seemings appropriately grounded in sensations. For arguments that one shouldn't make the distinction between seemings and sensations see (Chudnoff and DiDomenico 2015). Markie restricts to experiences that result from exercise of relevant knowledge-how. McGrath restricts to experiences that do not result from what he calls quasi-inferences.

^{viii} In addition to Anger the cases are Preformationism (attribution of containing an embryo to a seen sperm cell), Gun (attribution of being a gun to a seen pair of pliers), and Vivek (attribution of approval to a crowd of people with neutral faces).

^{ix} One might concede the general point but think that there is something special about Jill's overall experience that prevents it from having presentational phenomenology with respect to (b). I return to this sort of issue below.

^x Berit Brogaard pressed me to consider a variant on the case in which Jill *doesn't* know what expressions of anger look like. There are three variants on the case: (1) Jill has a mistaken view about what expressions of anger look like that still implies that if (a), then not (b); (2) Jill has the mistaken view that expressions of anger look the way horizontal eyes and mouth do, so that if (a), then (b); (3) Jill doesn't have a view about what expressions of anger look like. I can tell the same story as I tell in the text about case (1), though I shouldn't call Jill's view about what expressions of anger look like knowledge. In cases (2) and (3) it is not so clear that Jill doesn't gain justification for thinking Jack's eyes and mouth express anger. These look more like cases of epistemic misfortune: in (2) Jill's experience reinforces her mistaken view; in (3) Jill's experience could be the source of the mistaken view that she has in case (2).

^{xi} Anders Nes alerted me to the worry that the case might then also count as a core case of hijacked experience for which the Epistemic Deficiency thesis is not true. I suspect it shouldn't count as a core case, however. This is not because its low level content is also hijacked, rather because its low level content is already congruent with the high level content that is hijacked.