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Experience and Evidence Abridged

Susanna Schellenberg

Prologue to 'Experience and Evidence Abridged'

In my paper 'Experience and Evidence', I argue for an externalist view of perceptual evidence that makes room for a phenomenal conception of evidence.¹ More specifically, I argue that perceptual experience provides us with both phenomenal and factive evidence in the case of an accurate perception, and with phenomenal evidence in cases where things go wrong, such as hallucination and illusion. To a first approximation, we can understand phenomenal evidence as determined by how our environment sensorily seems to us when we are experiencing. To a first approximation, we can understand factive evidence as necessarily determined by the environment to which we are perceptually related such that the evidence is guaranteed to be an accurate guide to the environment. I argue that the rational source of both phenomenal and factive evidence lies in employing perceptual capacities that we have in virtue of being perceivers. In showing that both kinds of evidence have the same rational source, I provide a unified account of perceptual evidence and its rational source in perceptual experience.

What follows is a reprint of the first two sections of that paper. In section 1, I distinguish perceptual evidence from introspective evidence. In section 2, I develop an externalist conception of phenomenal evidence.

1 Perceptual Evidence and Introspective Evidence

If we have evidence, it is rational to heed this evidence. Perceptual evidence is evidence provided by perceptual experience. In so far as perceptual experience is directed at our environment, the evidence that perceptual experience provides us with is of (or as of) our environment. The idea that perceptual evidence is of (or as of) our environment is neutral on a whole range of vexed questions. It is neutral on whether perceptual

¹ This chapter is a reprint of the first two sections of Schellenberg (2013) with a new prologue by permission of Oxford University Press on behalf of the Mind Association.

evidence has content. It is neutral on what the nature of its content is—assuming there is evidential content. Moreover, it is neutral on what the relation is between the content of perceptual evidence (if any) and the perceptual experience that provides us with perceptual evidence. Finally, it is neutral on whether all aspects of our perceptual evidence are accessed or even accessible.² I take a stance on all these choice points in section 3 of Schellenberg (2013). But for the most part, the arguments in this chapter can be accepted irrespective of what stance one takes on these issues.

Regardless of how perceptual evidence is understood, it must be distinguished from introspective evidence. Introspective and perceptual evidence differ in what they are of: while perceptual evidence is of (or as of) one's environment, introspective evidence is of (or as of) one's experience or some other mental state. They differ in their source: while perceptual evidence stems from perception, introspective evidence stems from introspection. They differ in what one attends to: while one gains perceptual evidence in virtue of attending to one's environment, one gains introspective evidence in virtue of attending to one's experience or some other mental state (which may be of one's environment). When I speak of experience as providing us with evidence *directly*, I mean that we need not attend to our experience to have the evidence. So we need not introspect our experience to gain evidence: we have evidence simply in virtue of experiencing.³

I am not denying that when we experience we can introspect our experience and thereby gain introspective evidence. However, as I will argue in the next section, experience yields evidence without us having to introspect our experience. Indeed, I will argue—contra Williamson—that even when we are hallucinating our experience yields at least some evidence without having to resort to an appearance proposition. On Williamson's view, the evidence one has when one hallucinates is an appearance proposition of the form 'it seems to me that *p*' and so is provided by attending to the fact that one's environment seems a certain way to one. Appearance propositions involve appearance concepts—for example 'it seems' or 'it appears'—and entertaining such a proposition requires the ability to refer to oneself. Animals that do not possess appearance concepts and that are not capable of self-reference

² For the view that all evidence is propositional, see Williamson (2000); for the view that evidence can be non-propositional, see Plantinga (1993). For the view that evidence is necessarily accessible, see Chisholm (1977); for the view that evidence is not necessarily accessible, see again Williamson (2000).

³ This constraint is neutral on a whole range of ways of thinking of direct and indirect perception. For a discussion of the notions of 'direct' and 'indirect' perception, see Jackson (1977) and Snowdon (1992). It should be noted that on a radical view of the transparency of experience we are never aware of properties of our experience but only ever of what our experience is about. There are both empirical and philosophical reasons to deny that experience is radically transparent in this way. To name just one reason: when our epistemic access to our environment changes—for instance, because we take off our glasses—our experience will be different. The difference is due to how we experience our environment. While we are not necessarily aware of the fact that the difference in experience is due to a change in the experience rather than the environment, we can be. The fact that we *can* be aware of this is reason alone to reject the thesis that experience is radically transparent. For a discussion of this set of issues, see Smith (2002) and Martin (2002).

can hallucinate. They gain evidence in virtue of hallucinating even though they are not capable of entertaining appearance propositions. After all, they act on their hallucination.⁴ While it is a fact that the environment seems a certain way to us when we experience, we should distinguish between this fact and the sensory state we are in when such a fact holds. If we gain evidence in hallucination only by attending to the fact that it sensorily seems to us as if our environment is a certain way and so only by attending to our experience (rather than by attending to our environment, albeit failing to perceive), then the evidence we gain in hallucination is not provided directly through experience. I will present a view of perceptual evidence on which evidence need not be understood as propositionally or conceptually structured and on which phenomenal evidence need not involve appearance concepts.

2 The Phenomenal Evidence Argument

The basic argument for the thesis that perceptual experience provides us with phenomenal evidence goes as follows:

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| 1. If a subject <i>S</i> is perceptually directed at her environment (while not suffering from blindsight or any other form of unconscious perception), then it sensorily seems to <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is). | <i>premiss</i> |
| 2. If it sensorily seems to <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence. | <i>premiss</i> |
| 3. If <i>S</i> is perceptually directed at her environment (while not suffering from blindsight or any other form of unconscious perception), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence. | 1, 2 |
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The first premiss makes a claim about what is the case when we are perceptually directed at our environment. We can be perceptually directed at our environment without being perceptually related with our environment: when suffering a hallucination that is subjectively indistinguishable from a perception, we are perceptually directed at our environment, but fail to be perceptually related with our environment. The premiss states that it sensorily seems to us as if our environment is a certain way, if we are perceptually directed at our environment.⁵ It is neutral on whether our environment could sensorily seem the very same to us regardless of whether we are

⁴ Williamson (2000: 199) denies that such animals gain evidence through their hallucination. Such a view requires an independent explanation of why animals act on their hallucinations.

⁵ One might object that the notion of being perceptually directed to one's environment is equivalent to the notion of the environment sensorily seeming a certain way to one. In response, we can say that one could have a notion of being perceptually directed at one's environment while being eliminativist about sensory seemings. This alone shows that the notion of being perceptually directed is distinct from the notion of sensory seemings.

perceiving, hallucinating, or suffering an illusion. So it is compatible with a whole range of views about the nature of sensory seemings. Moreover, the premiss is neutral on whether experience has content. So it is compatible with a whole range of views about the nature of experience. Since the relevant sensory seemings are restricted to those in which our environment seems a certain way to us, the scope of the premiss does not extend to the ways things seem to us when we imagine. After all, when we visually imagine an object in our environment, it is not *our environment* that sensorily seems a certain way to us. It is rather *what we imagine* (e.g. our mental imagery) that sensorily seems a certain way to us.⁶

2.1 *Premiss 2: sensory states and phenomenal evidence*

The second premiss of the argument is more controversial. It states that sensory states provide us with phenomenal evidence. Accounts on which evidence is necessarily factive (Williamson 2000) and disjunctivist accounts (Snowdon 1981, McDowell 1982) will reject this premiss. In order to give support to this premiss, we need to address the question of what the relationship is between sensory states and phenomenal evidence.⁷

Since a sensory state is a kind of mental state, the thesis that sensory states provide phenomenal evidence entails—together with the theses that only mental states provide phenomenal evidence and that phenomenal evidence exists only if it is provided by something—the widely accepted thesis that our phenomenal evidence supervenes on our mental states.⁸ One might argue that there is a much stronger relation between phenomenal evidence and mental states, namely, identity. But for the sake of the phenomenal evidence argument, the relation of supervenience is all that is needed.

A different way of understanding the question of what relationship there is between sensory states and phenomenal evidence is as a question about their epistemic relation. The key epistemological questions are: what is the epistemic bridge that gets us from being in a sensory state to having phenomenal evidence? More generally, why is it rational to heed the testimony of our senses—especially if unwittingly we happen to be hallucinating? In different ways, these questions ask for the motivation behind premiss 2.⁹ I will give support to premiss 2 by arguing that

It is controversial whether blindsighters are perceptually directed at their environment. One could argue that they do not perceive, but merely detect or register particulars in their environment. Dretske (2006) argues that there is no such thing as unconscious perception and so would deny that blindsighters perceive. If there is no such thing as unconscious perception, then the qualifying clause in premiss 1 can be dropped.

⁶ The second premiss does not overgeneralize to imagination for the same reason.

⁷ For the purposes of this chapter, I am following Chisholm (1966) and Jackson (1977) in taking the relation between sensory seemings and sensory states to be a simple one. For dissenting views, see Sosa (2007) and Bengson (forthcoming).

⁸ See Feldman and Conee (1985) and Pryor (2000) for versions of this view and Gupta (2006), White (2006), Wright (2007), DeRose (2011), and McGrath (2013) for critical discussions.

⁹ Here and throughout, I understand 'rational' in an epistemic sense. I am not here concerned with practical rationality.

sensory states provide us with phenomenal evidence, since sensory states are systematically linked (in ways to be explained) to the particulars that they single out in the case of an accurate perception. Due to the existence of this systematic link it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses. What is the notion of rationality in play? For present purposes, it will suffice to work with the following understanding: if it is rational to heed the testimony of the senses, then a person who does not heed the testimony of her senses is blameworthy—provided she does not have defeaters. She is, for example, subject to the criticism that she is ignoring relevant information that is available to her.

In order to get a better grip on the question of why it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses, it will be helpful to consider the shortcomings of internalist conceptions of evidence. This conception of evidence goes back to at least Russell (1984 [1913]) and arguably to Descartes (1641, especially *Meditation II*). Russell understood evidence in terms of sense data, that is, strange particulars that are directly present to the mind. Neo-Russellians and more generally evidential internalists understand perceptual evidence in terms of conscious mental states that can be the very same regardless of the environment of the experiencing subject (e.g. Pollock 1974, Feldman and Conee 1985, Pryor 2000, and Tucker 2010).

If our conscious mental states can be the very same regardless of our environment and if these conscious mental states determine our perceptual evidence, then our evidence will be the very same in the good and the bad case—that is, our evidence will be the very same regardless of whether we are accurately perceiving or suffering a hallucination.¹⁰ But if perceptual evidence is the very same in the good and the bad case, then it is mysterious why it would be rational to heed the testimony of our senses (see Goldman 1999 for this line of criticism). It is plausible that the reason for why it is valuable to take how our environment seems to us at face value is because doing so constitutes a useful way of pursuing an accurate view of the world. Evidence can play that role, however, only if there is a systematic link between our sensory seemings and the way our environment actually is. In so far as evidential internalists do not account for such a link, they fail to account for the role of evidence as being a guide to how the world is.

In fairness, it must be noted that at least some evidential internalists take phenomenal evidence as determined simply by how the world sensorily seems to us, where that seeming need not be a guide to how the world actually is.¹¹ So they are

¹⁰ Illusions can be understood as a version of the good or the bad case. For discussion, see Antony (2011). For present purposes, we can remain neutral on how best to classify them. So as to avoid unnecessary complications, I will focus on the uncontroversial good and bad cases: accurate perception and hallucination. In section 2.3, I will show how the suggested view applies to illusions.

¹¹ See for example Pollock and Cruz (2004); though note that they talk of justification, rather than evidence. They argue that justification bears no deep connection to truth, but is rather to be understood in internalist procedural terms.

unlikely to be moved by the above line of argument. But the aim was not to argue against evidential internalists. The aim was to motivate the claim that an account of perceptual evidence ought to *explain* why it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses.

The thesis that evidence is a guide to how the world is puts into focus what phenomenal evidence is evidence for. Evidence is always evidence for something. Phenomenal perceptual evidence is evidence for what our experience is of—or would be of, were we perceiving. In order to make this explicit in the phenomenal evidence argument, we need to reformulate premiss 2 as follows:

Premiss 2*: If it sensorily seems to *S* as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is), then *S* is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case.

How should we understand this? Consider Percy who perceives a white cup on the desk in front of him and Hallie who suffers a subjectively indistinguishable hallucination as of a white cup on the desk in front of her. Percy's sensory state is of her environment and provides phenomenal evidence that there is a white cup on the desk. Similarly, Hallie's sensory state provides phenomenal evidence that there is a white cup on the desk. So Percy and Hallie both have phenomenal evidence in virtue of their environment seeming a certain way to them. The argument in support of premiss 2* goes as follows:

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| 2a. If it sensorily seems to a subject <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that is systematically linked to external, mind-independent particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>premiss</i> |
| 2b. If <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that is systematically linked to external, mind-independent particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case, then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>premiss</i> |
| 2.* If it sensorily seems to <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>2a, 2b</i> |
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The conclusion is the reformulation of the second premiss of the basic phenomenal evidence argument, that is, the premiss for which we needed further support. If we conjoin this argument for why sensory states provide phenomenal evidence with the basic phenomenal evidence argument, we get the following comprehensive phenomenal evidence argument:

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| 1. If a subject <i>S</i> is perceptually directed at her environment (while not suffering from blindsight or any other form of unconscious perception), then it sensorily seems to <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is). | <i>premiss</i> |
| 2a. If it sensorily seems to <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that is systematically linked to external, mind-independent particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>premiss</i> |
| 2b. If <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that is systematically linked to external, mind-independent particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case, then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>premiss</i> |
| 2.* If it sensorily seems to <i>S</i> as if her environment is a certain way (regardless of how it in fact is), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>2a, 2b</i> |
| 3.* If <i>S</i> is perceptually directed at her environment (while not suffering from blindsight or any other form of unconscious perception), then <i>S</i> is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. | <i>1, 2*</i> |
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We already discussed premiss 1. In the rest of this section, I will give support to premisses 2a and 2b.

2.2 *Premiss 2a: sensory states and perceptual capacities*

In order to give support to premiss 2a, it will be necessary to show that sensory states are systematically linked to external, mind-independent particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case and to specify how that systematic linkage is to be understood. Doing so will require presenting a modest externalist view of sensory states. The basic idea of this view is that when we perceive, we employ perceptual capacities by means of which we differentiate and single out particulars in our environment. The relevant particulars are external and mind-independent objects, events, property-instances, and instances of relations. Sensory states are understood as determined by employing perceptual capacities in a sensory mode, that is, modes such as seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, or tasting.¹² I will argue that if a subject *S*'s environment sensorily seems to contain *F* particulars to her (regardless of how it in fact is), then *S* is in a sensory state that is determined by employing perceptual capacities that function to single out *F* particulars.

Consider Percy who perceives a white cup on a desk. He employs his capacity to discriminate white from other colours and to single out white in his environment. Similarly, he employs his capacity to differentiate and single out cup shapes from, say,

¹² Here and throughout, 'determined' is understood in the sense of 'at least partially determined'. This leaves open whether there might be other determinants.

computer shapes and lamp shapes. He may also employ the capacity to differentiate and single out cups from, say, computers and lamps. The important point is that in virtue of employing such capacities, he is in a sensory state that is of a white cup.

What happens in hallucination? When we hallucinate, we employ the very same capacities that in a subjectively indistinguishable perception are employed while being perceptually related to external, mind-independent particulars. Since in hallucination, we are not perceptually related to a particular, we fail to single out a particular in our environment. We merely purport to single out a particular. As a consequence, at least some of the capacities employed are baseless. They are *baseless* in the sense that the targets of discrimination and selection—external, mind-independent particulars—are absent. Analogously, if we employ concepts, but fail to refer, the concepts employed remain empty.

Consider Hallie who suffers a hallucination as of a white cup on a desk. Like Percy, she employs the capacity to discriminate and single out white from other colours and she employs the capacity to differentiate and single out cup shapes from, say, computer shapes and lamp shapes. Since she is hallucinating rather than perceiving and so not perceptually related to a white cup, the capacities she employs are baseless. Yet even though she fails to single out any white cup, she is in a sensory state that is as of a white cup in virtue of employing the capacity to discriminate and single out white from other colours and cup shapes from other shapes.

How should we understand the perceptual capacities in play? They can be understood to be discriminatory, selective capacities, concepts, or some kind of functional property. There is good scientific evidence that discriminatory, selective capacities are the cognitively most low-level mental capacities employed in perception, so I will focus on this specific kind of perceptual capacity.¹³ A discriminatory, selective capacity is a low-level mental capacity that functions to differentiate, single out, and in some cases type the kind of particulars that the capacity is of. For example, if we possess the discriminatory, selective capacity that functions to differentiate and single out red, we are in a position to differentiate instances of red from other colours in our environment and to single out instances of red. More generally, to possess a discriminatory, selective capacity is to be in a position to differentiate and single out a particular of the type that the capacity is of, were one related to such a particular.¹⁴ So if we possess such a capacity, then—assuming no finking, masking, or other exotic case obtains (see

¹³ For discussions of the role of basic visual capacities and pre-attentive discrimination in early vision, see Julesz (1981), Watson and Robson (1981), Sagi and Julesz (1985), Malik and Perona (1990), Krummenacher et al. (2010), and To and Gilchrist (2011).

¹⁴ The notion of capacity in play can but need not be understood in a teleological, phylogenetic, virtue epistemological, or ontogenetic manner. For such accounts, see Millikan (1989), Neander (1996), Sosa (1991, 2007), Zagzebski (1996), Greco (2001, 2010), and Burge (2003, 2010). As I will argue in the rest of this section, a sensory state provides phenomenal evidence in so far as it is determined by capacities that are metaphysically and explanatorily dependent on the good case. As I will show, accepting this idea is compatible with accepting that such capacities may more often than not be used in a way that fails to produce accurate representations of the environment.

Lewis 1997)—the following counterfactual should hold: if we *were* perceptually related to a particular that the capacity functions to single out, then we *would* be in a position to single out such a particular.¹⁵ Singling out a particular is a proto-conceptual analogue of referring to a particular. Non-rational animals and infants as young as four months old can perceptually single out objects and property-instances in their environment, yet they do not have the capacity to refer. While referring requires conceptual capacities, singling out particulars requires no such capacities. There are further analogies between discriminatory, selective capacities and concepts. Like concepts, the same discriminatory, selective capacity can be employed in different environments and in this sense such capacities are repeatable. It is worth noting that discriminating between two particulars does not require attending to both particulars. It requires only registering their differences—however much in the background of one's sensory state this registering may occur. It is unclear what it would be to single out, say, the shade of a leaf without registering how it differs in at least one respect from its surround. More generally, it is unclear what it would be to single out a particular without registering how it differs in at least one respect from other particulars.

How does appealing to such capacities help understand sensory states in a way that supports premiss 2a of the phenomenal evidence argument? The suggestion is that sensory states are determined by employing perceptual capacities in a sensory mode. Any two experiences in which all the same capacities are employed in the same sensory mode will have the same sensory character if all else is equal. Although such capacities are necessarily determined by functional connections between perceivers and their environment, arguably they can be employed even if one is misperceiving or hallucinating. After all, the capacities are determined by general, functional relations between the organism and its environment—for instance, global patterns of the organism's response to its environment—and not by individual token responses. Yet, one could be prompted to employ such capacities due to non-standard circumstances: unusual brain stimulations or misleading distal inputs. If this is right, then we can employ a discriminatory, selective capacity even if a relevant particular is not present—where a relevant particular is a token of the type that the capacity functions to single out. The capacities employed account for the fact that in hallucinations we can purport to single out particulars: from a first-person perspective it can seem as if we were perceptually related to particulars in our environment.

Since sensory states are understood as determined by *employing* perceptual capacities rather than the capacities themselves, it is not revealed in our sensory character whether the capacities are baseless. So it is not revealed in our sensory

¹⁵ The inference from a claim about perceptual capacities to a counterfactual fails in finking, masking, and similarly exotic cases. However, all the standard ways of fixing the disposition-to-counterfactual inference can be exploited for the capacity-to-counterfactual inference. See in particular Lewis (1997). Finding a formulation of the capacity-to-counterfactual inference that is indefeasible in light of all possible finking, masking, and similarly exotic cases would be a project of its own. Therefore, I will here work on the assumption that no such exotic cases obtain. This assumption is independently plausible.

character whether we succeed in differentiating and singling out particulars, and so whether we are perceiving or hallucinating. An example will help illustrate the point. We possess the capacity to perceive red. Sometimes we employ this capacity successfully to single out something red, and sometimes we employ this capacity but fail to single out anything red. In the latter case, we suffer a hallucination as of something red, or an illusion that an object we perceive is red when in fact it is not red. The important point is that one can distinguish the employment of the capacity—what perceptions, hallucinations, and illusions have in common—from discriminating and singling out a particular—the matter on which perceptions, hallucinations, and illusions differ. It is the employment of the capacity that determines the sensory state. Whether or not a particular is singled out does not affect the sensory state.

If it is right that two experiences in which *ceteris paribus* all the same perceptual capacities are employed in the same sensory mode have the same sensory character, then subjectively indistinguishable perceptions, hallucinations, and illusions will share a metaphysically substantial common factor. The common factor is determined by the perceptual capacities that the subject employs in a sensory mode. But as I will show shortly, the fact that there is such a common factor does not imply that we are aware of a common factor, nor does it imply that the good case is analysed as a conjunction of a common factor and some additional element, such as a causal perceptual relation.

Before I show how this way of understanding sensory states supports premiss 2a, I will address four potential misconceptions. First, the idea that sensory states are determined by employing discriminatory, selective capacities in a sensory mode is compatible with there being additional aspects that determine sensory states. Such aspects may be sensations, appearance properties, sense data, qualia, intentional objects, phenomenal properties, awareness relations to property-clusters, or (uninstantiated) universals—to name just a few options.¹⁶ For present purposes, we can remain neutral both on whether there are any such additional aspects and—if there are any—on what their nature is. We can remain neutral on this, since the aim here is not to give a full account of sensory states, but rather to analyse what it is about sensory states that makes them rational to heed.

Second, we possess and make use of many discriminatory, selective capacities that are not phenomenally relevant—even when we perceive. I have not argued that

¹⁶ For sensations, see Peacocke (1983); for appearance properties, see Shoemaker (2007); for sense-data, see Robinson (1994); for qualia, see Levine (1983), Chalmers (1996), Block (2003), McLaughlin (2007); for intentional objects, see Harman (1990), Lycan (1996), Crane (1998); for phenomenal properties, see Chalmers (2006), Block (2007); for (uninstantiated) universals, see Dretske (1995), Byrne (2001), Tye (2002); for property-clusters, see Johnston (2004). For an excellent recent account of consciousness and overview of the current debate, see Hill (2009). While the proposal that sensory states are determined by employing perceptual capacities is compatible with there being such additional aspects that determine sensory states, the suggestion allows for a way to analyse sensory states without appealing to phenomenologically or metaphysically problematic entities, such as sense-data, qualia, intentional objects, or sensory awareness relations to (uninstantiated) universals, property-clusters, or other abstract entities. For a discussion of the problems of such views, see my (2011).

whenever we use such a capacity, we are in a sensory state. I have argued only that sensory states should be understood in terms of employing perceptual capacities in sensory mode. We can accept this thesis while acknowledging that there are many capacities—including discriminatory, selective capacities—the employment of which has no repercussions for our conscious mental lives.

Third, it is crucial that employing discriminatory, selective capacities is not just a matter of differentiating particulars, but also of singling out particulars. Due to this the sensory character of perceiving an instance of red is distinct from the sensory character of perceiving an instance of blue. Both cases may include differentiating red and blue, but in the former case, an instance of red is singled out, while in the latter case, an instance of blue is singled out. So the capacities employed are distinct and the sensory states differ.

Finally, all sorts of things can be understood to discriminate, including thermometers and sunflowers. When I speak of discriminatory, selective capacities, I mean always a kind of low-level mental capacity. Since I am not trying to analyse what makes a capacity mental, I will help myself to the notion of a mental capacity. The notion of capacities in play does not apply to thermometers and sunflowers, since the relevant capacities are a kind of mental capacity and thermometers and sunflowers do not have mental capacities.

Now, how does analysing sensory states in terms of employing perceptual capacities help explain why it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses? The aim was to develop a way of thinking about sensory states on which they are systematically linked to what they are of in the good case, and so, a way of thinking about sensory states that supports premiss 2a of the phenomenal evidence argument. How do appealing to perceptual capacities help develop such an account? As I will argue, sensory states are systematically linked to what they are of in the good case in the sense that the perceptual capacities employed in the bad case are explanatorily and metaphysically parasitic on their employment in the good case.

There is an *explanatory primacy* of the good over the bad case since one can give an analysis of the perceptual capacities employed in the bad case only by appealing to their role in the good case. Consider again Hallie who suffers a hallucination as of white cup on a desk. Even though she fails to single out anything white, she is in a sensory state that is as of an instance of white in virtue of employing the capacity to discriminate and single out white from other colours. She would single out an instance of white, were she in the good case—assuming again that no finking, masking, or other exotic case obtains. After all, she is employing a discriminatory, selective capacity the very function of which is to differentiate white from other colours and to single out white in her environment. In this sense, we need to refer to what Hallie would discriminate between and what she would single out in the good case in order to explain the role of the capacities she employs in the bad case.

Underlying this explanatory primacy there is a *metaphysical primacy* of the good over the bad case. More specifically, the explanatory primacy is licensed by a mor

basic metaphysical primacy. There is a metaphysical primacy of the good over the bad case in so far as one can possess the discriminatory, selective capacities employed in the bad case only in virtue of being the kind of being that could employ those very capacities in the good case. Call this the *metaphysical primacy thesis*. Why should we accept this thesis? The function of discriminatory, selective capacities is to differentiate and single out particulars of the type that the capacity is of. It would be unclear what it would mean to possess a discriminatory, selective capacity, the very function of which is to single out a kind of particular, without being in a position to single out such a particular when perceptually related to one. So the 'could' in the metaphysical primacy thesis should be understood to indicate a metaphysical rather than an epistemic possibility.¹⁷ An example will help illustrate the point. If we possess the capacity to discriminate and single out red from other colours, we can use this capacity to single out red in our environment. Were we not in a position to use our capacity in this way, when perceptually related to an instance of red, we would not count as possessing the capacity. In short, while discriminatory, selective capacities can be employed in hallucination, they are necessarily determined by relations between perceivers and their environment in so far as the function of the capacity is to differentiate and single out, say, instances of red in perception. In this sense, there is a metaphysical priority of the good over the bad case.

The metaphysical priority thesis entails the counterfactual that if we possess a discriminatory, selective capacity, then—assuming that no finking, masking, or other exotic case obtains—we would be in a position to single out a relevant particular, were we related to such a particular. However, it also entails the counterfactual that if we possess such a capacity, we would fail to single out a relevant particular, were we not related to such a particular. Similarly, the explanatory priority thesis entails symmetric counterfactuals. So why should we accept that there is an asymmetry between the good and the bad case? Why not say that the bad case is no less fundamental than the good case? After all, perceptual capacities are characterized both by how they behave in the good and the bad case. In responding to this challenge, I will focus on the metaphysical priority thesis, since it licenses the explanatory priority thesis. My explanation for why the metaphysical priority thesis holds carries over to an explanation of why the explanatory priority thesis holds.

While the metaphysical priority thesis entails symmetric counterfactuals, the thesis is not to be identified with them. The asymmetry buttressing the thesis is an asymmetry of function. Perceptual capacities function to single out particulars. They do not function to fail to single out particulars. It is compatible with this that they may be employed in hallucination thereby failing to single out particulars. In order to support this, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the notion of function in play. The heart has the function to pump blood. It does not have the

¹⁷ More specifically, the 'could' should be understood to indicate a restricted metaphysical possibility. A plausible restriction is to scenarios in which the subject's mental constitution is not radically altered.

function to fail to pump blood—though in the bad case it will fail. One possible way to understand this asymmetry is in terms of evolution: the function of the heart is what it was selected for (Millikan 1984). However, it need not be understood in an evolutionary way. Any plausible account of natural function will support the idea that the heart has the function to pump blood rather than the function to fail to pump blood. Likewise, perceptual capacities have the function to single out particulars in the environment. They do not have the function to fail to single out particulars. An evolutionary account of function would posit that perceptual capacities evolved for the purpose of singling out particulars rather than for the purpose of failing to single out particulars: they were selected to single out particulars. However again, there is no need to explain the asymmetry in evolutionary terms. On any plausible account of natural function, we can say that perceptual capacities function to single out particulars rather than function to fail to single out particulars.

Accepting the metaphysical priority thesis is compatible with acknowledging that one could possess a perceptual capacity that one has never actually used successfully in perception. Moreover, the perceptual capacities employed in hallucinations need not have been acquired through perceptions. They might be innate, they might have been acquired through testimony, or they might have been arrived at through imagination. So the metaphysical priority thesis does not imply that we must have successfully used a perceptual capacity in the past to count as possessing such a capacity. It implies only that we must be in a position to use the capacity successfully when perceptually related to a relevant particular, thereby singling out that very particular in our environment.

It is worth highlighting that my argument does not depend on the notion of discriminatory, selective capacities. It depends only on the idea that sensory states are systematically linked to what they are of in the good case in the sense that the perceptual capacities employed in the bad case are explanatorily and metaphysically parasitic on their employment in the good case. The perceptual capacities in play can be understood to be discriminatory, selective capacities, but alternatives are to understand the capacities to be concepts or some kind of functional property. I focus on discriminatory, selective capacities only since they are arguably the cognitively most low-level mental capacities employed in perception. One can accept my argument while appealing to perceptual capacities that are not discriminatory, selective capacities.

Now, does the existence of a perceptual capacity require the existence of at least one successful employment of that capacity? While it is possible to possess such a capacity without having been perceptually related to any particulars of the type that the capacity singles out in the good case, it is plausible that any such perceptual capacity is grounded in perception in so far as the existence of the capacity depends on perceptions of the particulars that the capacity singles out.¹⁸ If this is right, then it

¹⁸ This is not implied by the argument of the chapter. The phenomenal evidence argument requires only a weaker claim, namely, that any perceptual capacity is grounded in how things would come out in the

follows that there cannot exist any such perceptual capacity that is not grounded in perception. However, it does not follow from this that an individual subject must have had perceptions of the particulars that the capacity singles out to possess the relevant capacity. It follows only that there can exist a perceptual capacity that functions to single out a kind of particular, only if a particular of that kind has been perceived by someone, somewhere. The argument for the metaphysical priority of the good over the bad case does not depend on resolving the question of whether the existence of a perceptual capacity requires the existence of at least one successful application by someone, somewhere. However, depending on what stance one takes on this issue one must either reject or accept the metaphysical possibility of the scenario of a world of brains in a vat that can hallucinate. Regardless of what stance one takes on this issue, the suggested capacity view allows that a brain in a vat in our world could have hallucinations and so phenomenal evidence.

Can Swampman possess perceptual capacities? Swampman is a being that came into existence through a bolt of lightning and so has no causal history (Davidson 1970). If perceptual capacities are understood in an evolutionary way, then Swampman could not possess the capacities in play. However, if they are understood in a non-evolutionary way, then Swampman could possess the relevant capacities. After all, no past experiences are necessary to possess such capacities. The condition for their possession is understood counterfactually: if one possesses the capacity to single out red, then one would be able to single out an instance of red, were one related to such an instance. For present purposes, we can remain neutral on whether capacities are understood in an evolutionary or a non-evolutionary sense.

This opens the question of whether perceptual capacities are dependent on the particulars they function to single out.¹⁹ There are at least three different ways of understanding this question and my response is different depending on which way the question is understood. One way of understanding it is as a question about possessing capacities: could a subject possess a perceptual capacity, even though she has never been perceptually related to a particular of the kind that the capacity functions to single out? In response: yes. After all, the capacities could be innate, acquired through testimony, or acquired through imagination and she may have been unlucky and never been perceptually related to a relevant particular. Another way of understanding it is as an existence question: could a perceptual capacity exist that functions to single out a kind of particular that does not exist in our world, such as supersaturated red? In response: given what I argue in the chapter, that is possible. However, for empiricist reasons that go beyond the scope of this chapter, one might think that perceptual capacities must be grounded in perception in the sense that any

good cases. However, for empiricist reasons independent of the argument of this chapter, it is plausible to assume that such capacities are grounded in actual perceptions and not just possible perceptions. For a discussion of such reasons, see Goodman (1955).

¹⁹ Thanks to Matt McGrath for raising this question.

given perceptual capacity must have been used by someone, somewhere. On such a view, hallucinations of supersaturated red need to be analysed in terms of employing both the capacity to single out instances of red and the capacity to single out instances of supersaturatedness. A third way of understanding the question is as a question about employing capacities: could a perceptual capacity be employed even if the relevant particular is not present? In response: yes. After all, the very same perceptual capacity can be employed in hallucination and in perception.

I have argued that sensory states are systematically linked to particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case in the sense that the perceptual capacities employed in the bad case are explanatorily and metaphysically parasitic on their employment in the good case. The idea that sensory states are determined by employing such perceptual capacities is what supports premiss 2a of the phenomenal evidence argument.

2.3 *Premiss 2b: phenomenal evidence and systematic linkage*

Recall that premiss 2b of the phenomenal evidence argument has it that if a subject is in a sensory state that is systematically linked to external and mind-independent particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case, then she is in a sensory state that provides phenomenal evidence for the presence of particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case. This premiss supports the crucial transition from the metaphysical fact that a sensory state is systematically linked to the external and mind-independent *F* particulars it is of in the good case to the epistemic fact that such a sensory state provides evidence for the presence of *F* particulars. The truth of premiss 2b depends on two principles. The first principle is that if sensory states are systematically linked to what they are of in the good case in the sense specified, then it is epistemically rational to heed the testimony of these sensory states. The second principle is that if it is epistemically rational to heed the testimony of sensory states, then they provide evidence. I will give support to each principle in turn.

I argued that sensory states are systematically linked to particulars of the type that the sensory state is of in the good case in the sense that the perceptual capacities employed in the bad case are explanatorily and metaphysically parasitic on their employment in the good case. Sensory states are systematically linked to particulars in this way in so far as it is the function of the perceptual capacities that determine the sensory state to single out the relevant particulars. In speaking of it being the function of perceptual capacities to single out the relevant particulars, I do not mean to speak of their actual reliability but rather of how they are to be understood metaphysically. It is the function of a perceptual capacity to single out, say, instances of red. This is so regardless of how often the capacity is employed successfully to single out an instance of red. So this way of understanding why it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses has the advantage of not relying on any form of reliabilism. Our senses frequently lead us astray. Nevertheless, they provide us with evidence. On the

suggested capacity view, it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses since sensory states are systematically linked to the particulars that they are of in the good case. The notion of systematic linkage in play is understood in terms of a metaphysical and explanatory primacy notion, which is not a reliabilist notion. If perceptual capacities are employed in perception, then they happen to be reliable. However, even in this case it is the primacy of the good over the bad case that gives experience its epistemic force. On the account presented, the epistemic force of perceptual experience does not depend on whatever reliability (if any) perceptual experience might have.

The second principle states a sufficient condition for something to count as evidence. It follows from a substantive but largely uncontroversial view about evidence, namely, that it is a crucial property of evidence that if it is epistemically rational to heed x in the absence of defeaters, then x provides evidence.²⁰ Now, one might object that beliefs are linked to what they are of in the good case, but it is not rational to treat beliefs as evidence. So why is it rational to treat sensory states as evidence but not beliefs?²¹ In response, we can concede that many things are in some way linked to what they are of in the good case. It is not rational to treat all those things as evidence. However, I argued that sensory states are systematically linked to particulars of the type that they are of in the good case in the sense that the perceptual capacities employed in the bad case are explanatorily and metaphysically parasitic on their employment in the good case. So the systematic linkage between sensory states and what they are of in the good case was understood in a specific way. The capacities employed in perception link perceptual states with particulars in the environment. Indeed, perception is our primordial connection to particulars in our environment. For present purposes, the crucial difference between perception and belief is that perceptual capacities function to single out particulars, while the capacities employed in belief do not necessarily have this function. Any belief that is about particulars is arguably parasitic on perception. The capacities that determine beliefs are not systematically linked to what they are of in the good case in the sense that there is an explanatory and metaphysical primacy of their employment in the good case. Therefore, the argument provided for why it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses does not overgeneralize to beliefs.

Now, what if we assume for the sake of argument both that beliefs are a kind of sensory state and that the capacities that determine beliefs are explanatorily and

²⁰ For discussions of this property of evidence, see Ayer (1972); Kelly (2003, 2007); Neta (2003, 2008); Weatherston (2005); and Pryor (2012). An interesting question is what the connection is between the strength of the evidence we have for a proposition and our confidence in that proposition. For discussion of the relation between having evidence for p and having confidence in p , see Neta (2003, 2008) and Silins (2005). Since our concern here is restricted to the questions of what evidence perceptual experience provides us with and why it is rational to heed it, we can bracket this issue for the purposes of this chapter. I reserve a detailed discussion of how the account developed here connects to questions about confidence for a future paper.

²¹ Thanks to Alex Byrne and David Chalmers for pressing me on this point.

metaphysically parasitic on their employment in the good case? On these two controversial assumptions, it is plausible that beliefs provide us with evidence.²² So on these assumptions, the argument provided for why it is rational to heed the testimony of our senses generalizes to beliefs. It does not however overgeneralize and so would not be a problem for the developed capacity view, since beliefs are now understood to have many of the fundamental properties of perceptual states.

2.4 Coda

I have argued that our phenomenal evidence in the bad case is brought about by employing the very same perceptual capacities that in the good case allow us to perceptually navigate our environment. While these capacities are determined by functional relations to the particulars they single out in perception, we can employ the same capacities while failing to single out a relevant particular. So having phenomenal evidence is compatible with our perceptual capacities being employed baselessly. As a consequence, hallucinations provide us with tangible, though misleading phenomenal evidence.

So while the developed notion of phenomenal evidence is externalist in that phenomenal evidence is determined by employing perceptual capacities and the capacities employed in the bad case are both metaphysically and explanatorily parasitic on their employment in the good case, we can have phenomenal evidence even when we are in the bad case. The developed notion of phenomenal evidence is internalist only in so far as the phenomenal evidence of two experiencers in different environments can be the very same. It is not internalist regarding the accessibility of the evidence. More importantly, it is not internalist in so far as our phenomenal evidence is understood in terms of an asymmetric dependence of the bad on the good case.²³

This externalist notion of phenomenal evidence makes room for the idea that having evidence is a matter of being in an epistemic position that is a guide to how the world is, while allowing that we can have evidence even if we happen to have been led astray and so are in a state that is not accurate with regard to our environment. As a consequence, the suggested capacity view shows how experience provides us with phenomenal evidence even in the bad case without retreating to introspective evidence.²⁴

²² Indeed, Harman's (1973) coherentist view of justification suggests—albeit for different reasons—that beliefs provide us with justification.

²³ See Pryor (2001: 105–8) and Wedgwood (2002) for useful distinctions between ways of understanding the access requirement on our evidence and more generally different forms of epistemic internalism.

²⁴ Thanks to John Bengson, Rachael Briggs, David Chalmers, Katie Elliott, Reinaldo Elugardo, James Genone, Alvin Goldman, John Greco, Leon Leontyev, John Maier, Angela Mendelovici, John Morrison, Ram Neta, Casey O'Callaghan, Jonathan Schaffer, Nico Silins, Ernest Sosa, Kurt Sylvan, and Joshua Spencer for detailed comments and to Ned Block, Marian David, Branden Fitelson, Mikkel Gerken, Anna-Sara Malmgren, Chris Peacocke, David Rosenthal, and Jason Stanley for helpful discussions and email exchanges. Particular thanks are due to Benj Hellie, Adam Pautz, and Matt McGrath, who presented comments and raised excellent questions on versions of this chapter at the Carolina Metaphysics Workshop, the APA Eastern Division Meeting 2012, and NeuPhi, respectively. I am grateful also to members of the audiences at those occasions for their probing questions and helpful suggestions. I am indebted to members

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PART II

Traditional Internalism and Inferentially Justified Belief