On a Neglected Epistemic Virtue

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For more than a decade I have been quietly complaining that contemporary epistemology lacks an adequate answer to this question: What is the epistemic function of sensory awareness as opposed to immediate (or non-inferential) perceptual judgment?¹ It still seems to me a good complaint, and I wish to enter it again today.

Perhaps one sign that the complaint is still good is that on many epistemological views, a being as close to us as is possible given that it is devoid of sensory awareness --- a “zombie” if you will --- could be just as well-placed epistemically as his closest normal, fully sensate, counterpart. All the zombie would lack is the accompanying light, sound, and bodily sensational show. His beliefs could be as reliably formed as you like. They could be, in the recent terminology of Jack Lyons, vide his fine book Perception and Basic Beliefs, the output of a “primal perceptual system” that has evolved to generate reliable basic beliefs.²

¹ I believe that the first time I made the complaint in public was in 1999 at a session with Jack Lyons Perception and Basic Beliefs: Zombies, Modules and the Problem of the External World (Oxford University Press, 2009).
Moreover, many in a quite different epistemological tradition from Jack Lyons would say that the zombie’s immediate perceptual or quasi-perceptual judgments could be firmly held, non-inferential starting points, which constitute how the world immediately seems to him. They would then add that some such principle as 

If it immediately seems to a subject that $p$ and he has no evidence against $p$, and no reason to doubt that his belief was formed in a reliable way, then he is justified in believing that $p$.

then tells us that the zombie could be a full player in the epistemic game, at least as that game is being conceived by the relevant epistemology. Whereas, I think it is the sign of a deep mistake to think that a zombie could be a full player in the epistemic game.

Perhaps the zombie test is not a definitive test of the applicability of the complaint I actually want to make. For someone might plausibly hold that a zombie, in lacking sensory awareness, cannot arrive at the beliefs immediately entertained by a normal person, because sensory awareness crucially provides the contents of our everyday beliefs. We only get the worry about the zombie, someone might say, if we are naïve about the source of the topics of our thought and talk. Without sensory awareness, this line of thought goes, there is no chance of thinking about or talking about items in the scenes that fall before the eyes, or, more generally, items in the various fields that lie before the sense organs.

That is quite right as far as it goes. Even so, there are various patch-ups available here, so that the zombie challenge --- “How does your epistemology
explain the fact that a zombie is worse off epistemically?” --- can still approximate to an expression of my complaint. The zombies in question need not always have been so. They might be “latter day” zombies, who once have enjoyed the sensory light show, so that their friends and familiar surroundings are already stored up in their armamentarium of things to think and talk about. Their qualia gradually fade and then finally disappear, but they can still form immediate beliefs like --- “our salt shaker is arm’s length to my extreme right” --- and act on them. (Though this is a slightly different case, my Scottish grandfather, who was a distiller for Johnnie Walker, went blind in his sixties; but because he was a hard man with a regular life, who insisted that everything be kept in place, he was able to keep his blindness from his family for quite a while.)

I know of one epistemological position that does imply that latter day zombies are per se worse off epistemically. But this position still leaves me unsatisfied. I would like an epistemology to tell me just why latter day zombies could not be in “the best case”, the case where everything is going as swimmingly as possible from the epistemic point of view. But oddly, the following epistemological position implies that latter day zombies are worse off only in the bad case of hallucination or illusion. And even more oddly, they are “worse off” in that case only in lacking misleading evidence.

Suppose that we think that in the best case, where we are seeing a pineapple before us, our evidence is our factive state of knowledge that there is a pineapple before us. The latter day zombie seems as if he can rise to this standard, even though he is in one obvious sense blind, or devoid of sight. He can, it seems, know that there is a pineapple before him. He would not have seen that there is a pineapple before him, but this is just one determinate form
of knowledge; the latter day zombie, for all we have been told, may have his own determinate substitute for this. So, for all we have been told, the latter day zombie is no worse off epistemically than we are when we are in the best case, at least as *this* epistemology conceives of the best case. That is already a sin of omission, I think.

Now suppose that this epistemology goes on to say that in the bad case, the case in which a person is visually hallucinating a pineapple before him and forms the immediate belief that there is a pineapple before him, the person’s evidence is his knowledge that it visually appears to him that there is a pineapple before him. So far, this is Timothy Williamson’s view, if I have not misread him.³ (It has strong affinities with John McDowell’s epistemology, discussed later.⁴) Suppose we add to this view the very plausible thought that since latter day zombies lack the qualitative light show, they don’t have visual hallucinations, and so don’t have mere visual appearances, and so don’t have knowledge that it visually appears to them that things are thus and so. Then the zombie *is* in a way worse off in the bad kind of case. Our visual hallucinations leave us with palpable, if misleading, evidence. The latter day zombies cannot have this misleading evidence. Poor things!

That might be right, but even so, this seems to compound the sin of omission committed in the best case. Is it that sensory awareness simply allows us to have *misleading* evidence, which an insensate being cannot have?


Surely there is some distinctive positive epistemic virtue exemplified by the normally sighted, who arrive at the knowledge that there is a pineapple before them by seeing the pineapple before them, or more carefully, who have knowledge that there is a pineapple before them and see the pineapple there as well. Surely sight confers a distinctive epistemic advantage on us. As does audition, smell, taste and touch. Surely there is something per se epistemically defective about being insensate, even though your immediate perceptual beliefs are justified, reliably formed, and in fact often constitute knowledge.

My complaint then takes the form of a “characteristic generic”: contemporary epistemologists have neglected to specify the epistemic virtue that sensory awareness confers on immediate perceptual belief. Of course, generics admit of exceptions, and I shall later discuss the latest version of the exceptional line of thought that leads from Edmund Husserl and C. I. Lewis to Richard Fumerton.

**The Very Idea of Zombies**

Talk of latter day zombies is just an initial way of making the complaint vivid. Perfect blind-sighters might do as well, at least if we restrict the complaint to vision. Why is a perfect blind-sighter worse off epistemically than a normal sighted person?

In fact, however, talk of zombies is itself somewhat pernicious. Zombies are canonically defined as beings as like as can be to us, given that they are devoid of qualia. That brings to mind, and encourages as a default, a view of sensory awareness as providing us with sensations, raw feels or “qualia”, items understood to be (a) subjective or mental, in being ontologically
dependent on the individual mind that is enjoying them, (b) *qualitative*, in that it makes sense both to ask what is like to enjoy them and to take the full account of this as indicating, and perhaps exhausting, their nature, and (c) *mere accompaniments* of immediate perceptual judgment. Once we embrace this qualia-based picture of sensory awareness, it naturally seems that if we were to shave the qualia off, or fade them out, or invert them, the immediate perceptual judgments left intact could exhibit the same virtues.

Jack Lyons’ very appealing book plays out the logic of this in nice detail. Given the qualia-based conception of sensory awareness with which he starts, Lyon’s arrives quickly, and convincingly, at the conclusion that zombies need be no worse off epistemically.

This is, in many ways, a tale foretold. Elsewhere, I called the view that combines (a)-(c), “the Wallpaper View”, and noted that on such a view

*I*mmEDIATE perceptual beliefs are not themselves *licensed, warranted or justified* by any operation on the qualitative deliverances of sensory experience. Nor does the purely sensory element contribute in an indispensable way to the reliability of the subject’s beliefs. Even if in our case the immediate perceptual judgment that the moon is full arises as a result of a reliable causal process in which the subject’s qualia play a causal role, an equally *reliable* process in which qualia play no role seems readily imaginable, and genuinely possible. As a result of the reliability of the causal process that generates the judgment that the moon is full, that judgment may confer warrant on other judgments arrived at by inference from it. The judgment has these epistemic properties even if the accompanying qualia are absent, or idiosyncratic,
or faded, or faint, or even systematically reversed with respect to the qualia enjoyed by all others.

Thus on the Wallpaper View, when it comes to the epistemic status of immediate perceptual judgment, the deliverances of sensory awareness may be compared to the wallpaper or to the background music during a dinner. Neither the wallpaper nor the *tafelmusik* mediate a diner’s ingestion of food, even if the diner might stop eating were the wallpaper to suddenly peel or the music to abruptly change volume. The Wallpaper View of the deliverances of sensory awareness makes sensory awareness a curious sideshow, a mere provider of sensation alongside the epistemically interesting perceptual act.5

The problem with this view of sensory awareness and with the natural accompanying idea of zombies --- of beings as like as can be to us given that they are devoid of qualia --- is that *we too are devoid of qualia*. This is the lesson first taught by Elizabeth Anscombe, and importantly re-taught by Gilbert Harman.6 The lesson is that mark of the mental is the holding of the relation of intentionality between a minded animal and an object; it does not at all lie in the allegedly subjective or mental character of the objects on one end of the relation of intentionality. The Anscombe/Harman position becomes even more plausible when we do a little work in ontology.7

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7 It is important not to suppose that the linguistic intensionality of a report of a state or
When I close my eyes tightly in a pitch black room, no photons reach my retina, my visual system is not processing light, and yet I am aware of a default shade, what the psychologists call “brain grey”. This primitive form of visual awareness is due to the background hum of my visual system. Brain grey is a shade, like cinnabar, chartreuse or Chinese red. It is just a category mistake to think of shades as mental; they are no more mental than magnitudes (on my view, real numbers), which are among the many other things in a wide variety of categories to which I can stand in an intentional relation. Shades and magnitudes are what the Australian Materialists called “topic neutral” items, they are neither mental nor physical. As such, they should pose no problems to materialism properly understood, for materialism is a thesis about the mental.\textsuperscript{8}

If brain grey were mental, and was therefore ontologically dependent on the existence of minds, then since there is nothing ontologically distinguished about the shade brain grey, the same would be true of all the shades. Take the shade cinnabar. If cinnabar was mental that would mean not just that mercury event is the definitive sign always found when the state or event is mental.

\textsuperscript{8}Frank Jackson’s problem for materialism, the problem of what Mary knows, is better reconstruced as a challenge to materialists to explain the relation of sensory intentionality, involving as it does some degree of disclosure of its objects. The argument could be run on the disclosure of red, but the real and effective argument would work for the sensory disclosure of Fred as well as red, or for the disclosure of the function of addition or for the disclosure of a chair. While disclosure is essential to intentionality, no topic neutral relation involves anything like disclosure and necessarily so; moreover the paradigm physical relations, such as degrees of spatio-temporal nearness and matter/energy exchange, are essentially such that they do not involve the disclosure of one of their relata to the other. Herein lies the deep inadequacy of reductive materialism: There is no reduction of a relation which essentially involves disclosure to any combination of relations which essentially do not. Reductive materialism thus fails, but not because of some special problem raised by qualia. William Lycan is precisely right when he says that the real problem for materialism arises from the nature of intentionality not from qualia. See “Giving
sulphide was not cinnabar in shade before the existence of minds; it would also follow that there was no shade cinnabar for things to have or lack before the existence of minds. And that is just a confusion. Even a dispositional, and so mind-dependent, account of having the shade cinnabar as your surface color should admit that the shade cinnabar is not itself mind-dependent.

An intentional relation to a shade can make even minimal sensory experience qualitative, as in the case of brain grey, but that does not make the shade a mental quality. There are no mental qualities, so there are no mental qualities that can then be supposed to be shaved off in the zombies’ case. A “zombie”, however reliably placed, is just blind, deaf, devoid of the capacity to feel things, and innocent of smell and taste; in short, utterly insensate, in the ordinary sense of the term. He is obviously in a bad epistemic condition. The trick is to say exactly why.

Epistemology looks rather different after the change in view from understanding sensory awareness as the enjoyment of accompanying mental qualia to understanding it as awareness of the various qualified items that are the intentional objects of sensory experience. Once we recognize the intentionality of sensory awareness, we can’t help recognizing the vast range of objects of sensory awareness. Sensory awareness of many of these objects can then be seen to play a crucial epistemic role.

Unfortunately, this can only be shown in a rather plodding way, namely by outlining in detail the different picture of sensory awareness and then by explaining how sensory awareness, so understood, confers a certain epistemic virtue on immediate perceptual belief. But first we should set aside the idea that Science forces us to see the senses themselves, as opposed to their neural

Dualism its Due” Australasian Journal of Philosophy 87 (4), 551-563, 2009
constitution, as mere transducers of energy. There are sciences and sciences, and they have different subject matters.

**What is the “Scientific” Starting Point in Theorizing Sensory Awareness?**

By way of offering a short *apologia pro vita sua*, prepared for Steve Pyke’s grisly photo album *Philosophers*, W.V.O. Quine wrote:

The world around us pelts our nerve endings with light rays and molecules, triggering sensations. Growing up in a garrulous society, we learn to associate patterns of these sensations with words and patterns of these words with further words until we reach the point somehow of talking about objects in the world around us. We come to talk of animals, plants, planets, galaxies and also of the nerve endings themselves, the light rays and molecules. We talk of immaterial things too: numbers, classes and properties. I have sought a clearer view of the connections, logical and casual, between stimulation, language, and the natural world that language purports to describe.

Given Quine’s starting point --- the pelting of our nerve endings --- it is entirely unclear how there could be a “garrulous” society for us to grow up in, at least one that has itself reached the point of “talking about objects in the world around us” by associating words with patterns of irritation of our nerve endings or with the resultant sensations. The deep pathos in the passage collects around the word “somehow”; for if the conditions of one’s nerve endings or the resultant sensations exhausted one’s purview of reality then
the only reality one could come to describe would be exhausted by this or that possible condition of one’s nerve endings. Even the apparently bridging hypotheses that seem to describe the relation between these irritations and “objects in the world around us” could not mean what they manifestly seem to mean. The likely result is not just massive indeterminacy of reference on the assumption that we “somehow” refer to objects in the world around us; rather it is much more determinate reference, but merely to the conditions of our nerve endings or of our inner sensory fields.

Quine’s self-confessed starting point is just the old view that frames the discussion of the senses in early modern philosophy; the senses are simply loci of irritation or titillation, so that sensory awareness simply consists in enjoying the resultant sensations that are determined simply by the condition of the nerves. In The Assayer (1623), Galileo writes

A piece of paper or a feather drawn lightly over any part of our bodies performs intrinsically the same operations of moving and touching, but by touching the eye, the nose, or the upper lip it excites in us an almost intolerable titillation, even though elsewhere it is scarcely felt. This titillation belongs entirely to us and not to the feather; if the live and sensitive body were removed it would remain no more than a mere word. I believe that no more solid existence belongs to many qualities which we have come to attribute to physical bodies --- tastes, odors,

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9 Elsewhere, in “Objectivity of Mind and the Objectivity of Our Minds” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, LXVI, 2007, I have argued that causation is too promiscuous a relation to get us from awareness of some narrowly determined inner condition to reference to external objects.
colors and many more.\footnote{10 From the Stillman Drake translation published as Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo (Doubleday Anchor, 1957) pp 274-5.}

Here we have the horrible idea, which also bamboozled Descartes and Hume, and went on to wreak so much havoc in early modern philosophy; the idea that the deliverances of the senses should be compared to bodily sensations or “titillations” or “impressions”. (Even Thomas Reid, who recognizes that Descartes and Hume are somehow bamboozled, can only bring himself to say that sensory experience gives us arbitrary signs of what is good and bad for us.) The horrible idea lives on in the very idea of narrowly supervening “qualia”. Once we understand the deliverances of the senses in this way, \textit{it is no surprise that we can assign no more epistemic significance to sensory awareness than to bodily sensation.}

There is a different understanding of the deliverances of the senses found not in the neurophysiology of perception (which does properly focus on the pelting our nerve endings undergo) but in perceptual psychology and psychophysics. Psychophysics is in many ways a very successful science, one which managed to sail serenely forward between the whirlpool of introspectionism and the rocky shoals of behaviorism. Its methods are simple, but its results include some of the best candidates for the title of “a psychophysical law”. There is very little intervening theory between observation and confirmed hypothesis; you pretty much know exactly where you are; that is, what the confounding variables might be, and how to control for them (e.g. by the use of “stepwise” techniques). The experimental stimuli are quantifiable, be they the purity of prepared odors, the strength of the
solution of compounds that might be tasted, the force of pressures against the skin, the intensity and frequency of tones, the luminance of pure lights, or the designators (in Edward Land’s sense) associated with various colored arrays. The aim is develop hypotheses that concern the exact conditions of absolute and relative discrimination, sensory fatigue, sensory interference, sensory combination and (in Land’s case) sensory illusion.

It is the data of this mature science that are of interest here. From Gustav Fechner and Wilhelm Wundt, through Charles S. Peirce and Joseph Jastrow to the present, the data have not included the irritation of nerve endings. Nor have the more progressive parts of psychophysics relied significantly on subjects’ introspective reports of the quality of their sensations. Instead, the data mostly consist of (i) observations of those occurrent events that involve subjects coming to attend to the relevant light, tone, odor, taste, pressure on the skin, illusory color (as in the famous Land array), or whatever the external item might be (ii) reports on the part of subjects of their own such attentive sensory episodes or (iii) surrogates for such reports, such as button-pressings; where these surrogates are taken by the experimenters to be causal consequences of the relevant attentive sensory episodes, i.e. the very episodes of which data of type (i) are observations and data of type (ii) are reports.

The particular focus on sensory illusion has been a rich vein for perceptual psychology more generally considered; here the attentive sensory episodes that serve as data are directed not just at lights, sounds, smells, etc. but also at aspects of real or depicted scenes before the eyes, or more generally aspects of the various sensory fields. Then there is the important issue of perceptual priming, where for example, there is great interest in
questions like this: Presented with the following array, under what conditions can a subject be primed to see the depiction of the young woman before seeing the depiction of the old woman. (Does it depend for example on the gender or age of the subject?) These sorts of questions essentially concern the conditions for attentive sensory episodes, such as seeing the depiction of the young woman.

An obvious proposal is that in thinking about the deliverances of the senses, we as philosophers should take psychophysics and perceptual psychology, and hence the attentive sensory episodes that are at the core of their data, quite seriously. We should investigate the attentive sensory episodes philosophically and explore just where they fit with respect to immediate perceptual belief. Maybe then we will break out of the Galilean mind-set, and come to have a better picture of the epistemic significance of the deliverances of the senses.

All right, enough motivational uplift, now to the plodding bit.
Attentive Sensory Episodes

Attentive sensory episodes, hereafter ASEs, are what are reported when we report our looking at, listening to, smelling, tasting and touching things. They are what we observe when we observe people looking at, listening to, tasting and touching things. Ontologically, they are episodes, datable events which take time. Moreover, they are inherently conscious events, involving particular intentional relations (seeing, hearing, tasting...) to their external targets, be those targets sounds, or lights, or colored shapes, or looks, or smells, or pressures on the one hand, or cellos, torches, pineapples, roses or handshakes on the other. In the psychophysics lab the focus is often on the former sorts of targets, in perceptual psychology more generally, and in ordinary life, we more frequently report and observe the latter sorts of targets.

ASEs involve attention to specific items in the scene before the eyes, or more generally to specific items in the fields before the senses; hereafter their “targets”. They often serve to introduce their targets as new topics for demonstration, thought and talk. ASEs are themselves potential targets of other ASEs, for example we see them taking place, as we do from a very early age. (Recall the literature on joint attention.)

In an ASE the target is presented in a certain manner, and the target may or may not conform to its manner of presentation. Hence these manners of presentation are not Fregean senses, which determine something as their referent when and only when the referent satisfies the sense. A target can be presented in an ASE in an illusory fashion, and yet the ASE may thereby allow its subject to make his or her first demonstrative reference to the target, and
so have the target as a topic of thought and talk. So it is with the “bent” pencil illusion.

Even someone innocent of the illusion involved, someone taken in by it, can have the pencil presented to him in an illusory way, and so go on, for the first time, to talk and think about the very pencil in question. This kind of case, where our very first way of experiencing a thing or of thinking of thing is false to the thing’s nature, was not salient for Frege, who was centrally concerned with reference in logic and mathematics. (There may, however, be mathematical cases of this sort, where the first way mathematicians had of thinking of some mathematical item was confused or indeed inconsistent. The case of infinitesimals comes to mind.) The best model of the relation between manner of presentation and target in an ASE is given by “the theory of appearing” where the manner of presentation of a target is just the-target-presenting-in-a-certain-manner.11

(There is a hard question whether there could be a class of targets that are fully self-presenting, where the distinction between a target and its manner of presentation idles, in such a way that what appears could only be as it appears. Think of brain grey or of what Russell said about the colors.\textsuperscript{12} However, there is no need to settle this arcane question up front. There are a lot more indisputable and interesting things to say ASEs before we get to that.)

As token events, ASEs are individuated by their subjects, targets, times of occurrence, and the manners of presentation of their targets, as well as their particular underlying physical constitution (which is in part neural but also goes all the way out to the object sensed). As tokens they can be typed along many dimensions, by abstracting away from specific subjects, targets, times, manners, or physical constitutions.

The reports of ASEs are, on their face, not propositional attitude reports. Consider these examples:

Uri stared for three minutes at the Rottweiler chewing the meat.
Jane briefly smelled the coffee
Sam listened to Sutherland's vocal acrobatics, until he could stand them no more.
Mary tasted the astringency of the calvados.
I feel the pain in my leg suddenly passing.

\textsuperscript{12} “The particular shade of color that I am seeing may have many things to be said about it...but such statements...though they make me know more truths about the colour, do not make me know the color itself better than I did before; so far as concerns knowledge of the colour itself as opposed to knowledge of truths about it, I know the color perfectly and completely when I see it, and no further knowledge of it is even theoretically possible” \textit{The Problems of Philosophy} (London, OUP, 1912) p. 47.
Indeed, if we take these sorts of reports seriously it becomes obvious that there is an enormous variety of targets of attentive sensory episodes, none of which are propositions. Here is a preliminary list, with some examples of each sort.

**Audibilia**
- Sounds/Sound streams: the bang, that burbling
- Sounding objects: the gun, the stream
- Music: the opening of *Back in the USSR*
- Musical Instruments: drums
- Speech, singing
- People speaking, people singing
- Animal noises: birdsong
- Animals making noises: birds

**Olfactibila**
- Smells: the smell the rose gives off
- Things/Stuffs that smell: the rose, the rosewater

**Gustabilia**
- Tastes, textures: bitterness, crunchiness
- Things/Stuffs with tastes, textures: vinegar, cornflakes.

**Tangibilia**
- Objects
- Stuff
- Plants, animals and people
- Changes in things: the bird moving in my hand
- Conditions of things: the weight of the bird
• Powers of things: the strength of the bird
• Surfaces
• Textures
• Shapes
• Holes
• Patterns of resistance to touch
• Solidity
• Various degree of hotness, and of coldness
• Relations: Juxtapositions, Co-occurrences, qualitative contrasts with respect to textures, hotness, coldness etc.
• Absences
• The numerosity of small collections (usually up to collections of five?)

**Visibilia**
• Lighting
• “Objects”: Middle-sized dry goods
• Middle-sized wet goods (did Austin think that soaking a sweater made it invisible?)
• Plants, Animals and people
• Stuff
• Events (including bodily movements and intentional actions)
• Conditions of things
• Surfaces
• Colors
• Shapes
• Textures
• Relations: juxtapositions, co-occurrences, qualitative contrasts with respect to the above
• Absences
• The numerosity of small collections (usually up to collections of six?)
• Surfaces
• Holes
• Specular highlights
• Shadows
• Phenomena such as rainbows, the aurora borealis, the horizon, the vault of the sky

**Bodily Sensibilia**
• Bodily sensational qualities: pain, nausea, dizziness, tingling etc.
• The bodily field
• The position and movements of one’s limbs, etc.

**Visual (more generally sensory) Effects:**
• “Unreal” fingers and the like
• phosphenes
• afterimages
• auras (as in migraines)
• the creepies under the skin (as in “illusory parisitosis”)

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**ASEs Are Not Forms of Pure Passivity**
ASEs involve attention, attentive search and the like. Although in some cases ASEs may be forced on us --- the snap may be so loud that it captures our attention --- often they are things we do because of explicit beliefs and desires that we have. We can be ordered or urged to attend. “Try to visually discriminate the depiction of the young woman in the array!” Just because ASEs are early on in perceptual processing doesn’t mean they are not directed by what is already there “later on”. Thirsty people are better at detecting transparency. And there is some evidence that emotional attachment effects size perception. We are often enjoying sensory episodes as part of an explicit investigation of our environment, as in a search for clues.

The range of items we can target or attend to in ASEs depends in part on powers of discrimination and recognition, which come with acquired knowledge and conceptual development. You hear the loud snapping sound, the sports trainer hears the snapping of an Achilles tendon. It is his hearing the snapping of his protégé’s Achilles tendon that explains his particular alarm. Your alarm, by contrast, might be explained by your hearing the loud snapping sound and inferring that it is the snapping of one of the protégé’s Achilles tendons. These are different explanations, involving different ASEs.

As we get older and more experienced, the acuity of our sense organs may diminish, but our powers of sensory discrimination and recognition expand, and our sensory starting points are accordingly richer.

**ASEs Don’t Intrinsically Involve Taking the Target to be a Certain Way**

Imagine avoiding error by adopting a certain sort of neutral attitude toward your experience (Husserlian bracketing, or Sextus’s arrepsia, i.e.
mental equipoise, inclining neither for nor against the appearances.) You still enjoy ASEs; you still see the pineapple, despite not taking anything to be a pineapple. In the similar psychological condition of “de-realization,” experience seems to its subject to be neutral on how the world is, but modulo a drop off in attentiveness, even in de-realization, there are still sensory episodes directed at the usual sorts of things. I can understand the order: “Stop taking things to be that way.” (Say by a doctor, who tells me it is a dream or hallucination.) I can understand the order “Stop visually attending to things, close your eyes.” But they are quite different orders, directed at different sorts of acts.

Recall John McDowell’s account of visual perception, on which immediate perceptual judgment is grounded in states we report in the form of “S sees that a is F”. Whatever the virtues of McDowell’s account, it starts too late to be an account of how sensory experience entitles you to make the perceptual judgment that a is F. For your seeing that a is F has already involved you in taking a to be F. Contrast your seeing the F-ness of a. That ASE does not involve you in having taken the world to be a certain way.

**Externalism is Trivial for Most ASEs**

When it comes to most ASEs, “ontic externalism”, the claim that their occurrence supervenes on more than is in the head, is as trivially straightforward as externalism about kicking a football, or bathing in water, or eating sushi. The sensory event kind --- smelling a (some particular) rose --- consists of events that essentially involve particular roses, even if each such event has all the neural effects it has in virtue of that part of it which is merely
neural in its constitution. ASEs have other effects as well, independent of their neural parts. I can see Martha Stewart smelling a rose, or Robert Parker tasting the wine, or Efren Reyes examining the layout on the pool table. (In the first two cases what I see is an event, in the third a course of events involving sequences of ASEs.) No brain scan of the operation of Stewart’s neurons, however complete, can disclose to me that she is smelling a particular rose. I need to look at the connection between her olfactory system and the world, what she is doing with her nose. The constitutional structure of the event of her smelling a rose extends outside her head to the rose itself. In general, the constitutional structure of an act of sensing goes all the way out to, and includes, the thing sensed.

“Disjunctivism” Fails for ASEs: There are Obviously Common Factors.

There is obviously a common factor as between smelling a rose and merely smelling a smell that is indistinguishable from the smell of the rose. The common factor is a smell of a certain sort. The same with tasting a chop, touching an airplane, hearing a car crash, and so on and so forth. The common factors are the taste that is the taste of the chop, the feel that is the feel of the airplane, the sound that is the sound of the crash, and so on and so forth.

Are there things seen which are likewise common factors, as it were the visual analogs of sounds or smells? I believe that there are. You see an item by visually discriminating one of its objective looks, and such objective looks are often direct items of vision. To be a rainbow is just to be some water vapor which has such and such a look. You see a rainbow there by seeing such a look there. It is crucial to note that these common factors, the smells, tastes, looks,
etc. are not mental items; “the” doggy look is not a mental item. The look or range of looks you have to be able to discriminate in order to have a visually workable concept of a dog just involve general standing features of dogs, namely the range of ways they look.

The common factors are common actual or potential targets of ASEs. You can attend to the smell of the rose or you can attend to the smell that you smell in smelling the rose. However, contrary to the general suggestion of Michael Martin about common factors, understood by him to be common mental types, the smelling of the smell that is the smell of the rose does not automatically “screen off” smelling the rose, the rose itself can remain as an object of olfactory awareness, nor does awareness of the surface screen off awareness of the object or the stuff of which it is the surface.

The screening-off argument cannot be in general valid. (That is, it cannot be valid, since this is a feature with an inbuilt generality.) For in smelling the rose we typically smell the smell that is the smell of the rose.

**ASEs are Subject to “Exo-spection”**

Often when I engage in an ASE I am aware of it going on, just from immediate reflection. I am not just attending to the target, but I am aware of my attending to the target. (Typically, and crucially, I am also aware of myself as attending to the target.) There are not only attentive sensory episodes, there are attentive *reflective* episodes. (Those are not propositional either.) I not only see the fullness of the moon but I am aware of my seeing the fullness of the moon; and this by “reflection alone” in the sense of not relying on any
further evidence or investigation beyond turning my reflective attention to my seeing the fullness of the moon.

Compare proprioception: it allows me to be aware of my moving my limbs. My recently envatted duplicate can’t be aware of the movement of his limbs. He does not have limbs. There is more that is “within my immediate ken” to use McDowell’s phrase. That should be no surprise, for my recently envatted brain duplicate is properly speaking blind, and deaf, and so on. Indeed, if it were not for the narrowly supervening ASEs that he enjoys, he would be utterly insensate.

Consider

(R) The only ASEs of his that $S$ can be aware of are the kinds of ASEs that $S$’s recently envatted brain duplicate could be aware of.

R is false. And this is crucial for the epistemology of perception. For it means that my sensory starting points are richer than those enjoyed by my recently envatted brain duplicate. As a result, I may well have a range of immediate beliefs that are epistemically better, specifically more open to sensory ratification, than he does. (More on this later, it is one of the main points of the paper.)

If this is right it follows that the so-called New Evil Demon hypothesis

(NED) $S$’s beliefs exhibit the same level of justification as the corresponding beliefs of his recently envatted brain duplicate
is false, at least when we replace “justification” with “epistemic virtue”. Of course, it is obvious that S's beliefs and those of his recently envatted brain duplicate may differ in respect of their truth and hence their status as knowledge, but I believe that they also differ with respect to the neglected epistemic virtue, which I shall go on to characterize.

Instead of dramatizing my complaint by way of latter day zombies, I might now dramatize it by way of recently envatted brain duplicates. The idea that my epistemic starting points are the same as someone who is now almost insensate seems well, er, um, ah...less than coercive. (At this stage, you might take this as echoing what reliabilists say against epistemological internalists. But that is not quite my point; the difference will emerge later.)

ASEs and “Experience”

When a philosopher talks about experiences, it is proper to press him or her on what exactly the conditions of individuation are for the things he or she has in mind. Much talk of experience is too indeterminate to be of real philosophical use. There is the quasi-mass noun use of “experience”, as in “experience is mostly veridical”. There is the dummy sortal use, as in Alex Byrne’s example --- “My three most embarrassing experiences in graduate school were nothing compared to this.” --- where we can paraphrase away apparent reference to three token experiences in favor of three or four occasions of embarrassment. And I have already criticized the idea that external sensory experiences are the mere enjoyment of qualia, so appeal to qualia is not going to be helpful. Hence the immediate philosophical relevance of the ASEs; they are paradigmatically experiential, they are countable and
datable episodes, and they are taken for granted by and studied in psychology and psychophysics.

I open my eyes, and something happens; I enjoy a course of visual experience, which involves and supports a range of ASEs. Nothing could be that very course of experience unless it involved and supported the same ASEs. As the lighting or perspective changes, or as my gestalt groupings change, the course of experience changes its character. A course of experience is thus partly constituted by a series of ASEs, with one or another evolving out of previous ASEs in accord with changes in the subject and the environment.

While a token ASE cannot exhibit any more or less acuity than it does -- it discloses what it does, and that is that -- a course of experience, involving as it does a succession of ASEs, may exhibit different degrees of acuity, and it may go from being misleading in one respect to no longer being misleading in that respect. It therefore may go from being “illusory” to being an adequate disclosure of the targets in question.

Not everything given in a course of experience is an object of attention, and hence a target of an ASE, but if something is experienced it is a potential object of an ASE (residual elements aside). So, residual elements aside, let us individuate token courses of experience in terms of the ASEs they ground. Then we can individuate types of experiences by abstracting away from the subject, particular constitution and time of occurrence of token courses of experiences. We can say:

A type of course of experience \( E = E^* \) if and only if (subject, token constitution and time aside), \( E \) and \( E^* \) have the same actual ASEs (same targets, same manners of presentation) in the same order and the same
ground for potential ASEs, and the same residual elements, all in the same sequence and pattern.

This entails a necessary condition that figures in the argument that follows:

\[ E = E^* \text{ only if (subject, token constitution and time aside) } E \text{ and } E^* \text{ have the same actual ASEs.} \]

So there is no modeling of courses of experience without modeling the ASEs, and if ASEs cannot be modeled by propositional attitudes then neither can courses of experience.

Why not instead individuate experiences and courses of experience in terms of what is indistinguishable to the subject? Why not endorse the “Phenomenal Bottleneck Principle” whose motto is: no noticeable change in experience, no change in the experience? Why say that a course of experience really changes when it first involves an illusory ASE, and then another indistinguishable ASE that is veridical? Why not focus simply on a constant ASE directed at the common factor? Why say that a course of experience really changes when it first involves an ASE directed at Tweedledee, and then another indistinguishable ASE directed at Tweedledum? Why not focus on a constant ASE directed at the common appearance Tweedledum and Tweedledee exhibit?

A main part of the answer is that the Phenomenal Bottleneck Principle “No noticeable change in experience, no change in the token experience” is false. Consider the slugabed student lying in from early morning to midday. First the student experiences the darkness of the bedroom, and by midday he
experiences the brightness of the bedroom. These at least are, or involve, different token experiences. However, we can subdivide the student’s five hours in bed into very short intervals, across no one of which is there a noticeable change in his experience of the degree of illumination of the room. Applying the Phenomenal Bottleneck Principle step by step, we get the false result that across the five hours there has been no change in the student’s token experience of illumination.

**ASEs Can’t be Modeled by Propositional Attitudes**

Finally, there something about ASEs that shows that they should not be modeled as propositional attitudes. (There is more than one thing that shows this; ASEs are events, propositional attitudes are not, but somehow these obvious old-school points in ontology don’t carry the day anymore.)

Suppose I have a particular belief directed at a contingent proposition, e.g., that Paul Chapman gets the ball in front of goal in the 2009 Australian Rules Grand Final. It is the very same token belief whether it is true or false that Chapman gets the ball there. My token belief is “bipolar”; it is true or false depending on what Chapman actually does. However, the ASE which is the token event of my seeing Chapman getting the ball in front of goal in the Aussie Rules Grand Final does not have bipolar conditions of veridicality. It could not occur unless Chapman gets the ball in front of goal. There is no false seeing or tasting or touching or smelling or hearing! Nor can the relevant token ASEs “go false” or “go true” if things change.
Paul Chapman in the blue and white horizontal stripes, with the ball in front of goal.

Of course, I *might* be enjoying an illusory sensory episode that I cannot distinguish from seeing Chapman get the ball in front of goal. I can, after all, entertain some doubt that I am not in fact seeing Chapman get the ball in front of goal. It could be that I am in fact seeing Chapman get the ball in front of
goal, while it is nonetheless *epistemically possible* that I am in fact subject to an illusion (the player with the ball is not Paul Chapman but a player disguised as Chapman). Indeed, I could be so crazed with the desire for my team’s victory that it is very possible I have entirely hallucinated Chapman getting the ball in front of goal. But the following is not on. I am seeing Chapman get the ball in front of goal, but it is metaphysically possible that this very sensory episode, my seeing what I am in fact seeing, is an illusion or hallucination, precisely in respect of Chapman’s getting the ball in front of goal.

Compare this argument: that lectern could be made of ice or it could be made of wood, so there is a lectern that is capable of variable constitution as between ice and wood. We now know, thanks in large part to Saul Kripke, that this is a non sequitur, which confuses epistemic and metaphysical possibilities. Similarly, the argument from the epistemic possibility of undetectable illusion to the bipolarity of experience is a non-sequitur.

Moreover, the claim that experiences are propositional attitudes directed at their own conditions of satisfaction is *not*, contrary to John Searle, to be argued for by pointing out that the fact that experiences come in two varieties the falsidical (which further sub-divides into the hallucinatory and the illusory) and the veridical, and then pointing out that this means that experiences must have satisfaction conditions, i.e. conditions of being falsidical or veridical. Searle’s basic structuring claim in *Intentionality*, namely that the view of experiences as propositional attitudes directed at their own conditions of satisfaction is

an immediate (and trivial) consequence of the fact that [visual experiences] have conditions of satisfaction, for conditions of
satisfaction are always that such and such is the case.\textsuperscript{13}
is plainly false.

Token ASEs are individuated by their subjects, targets, times and manners of presentation of the target, and their particular underlying physical constitution. Various ways of typing such episodes (e.g. by abstracting out subjects and times, and perhaps particular constitution) are available. What is \textit{trivial} is that we can type ASEs in many ways, and among these are the two types, the veridical and the falsidical. We can then say:

An ASE is of the veridical type iff the proposition formed by \textit{predicating}\textsuperscript{13} of the target of the ASE the ASE’s manner of presentation of that target is a true proposition.

It \textit{is} trivial that each ASE has conditions of satisfaction or veridicality. But the “experiences are propositional attitudes” tradition; the tradition from David Armstrong and John Searle to Susanna Siegel and Alex Byrne goes far beyond this triviality to a quite controversial claim about what “experiences” \textit{constitutively are}, namely, certain propositional attitudes with contingent contents that could be true or false.

No; experiences, which constitutively involve ASEs, thereby constitutively involve items that can’t be modeled as (putatively world-describing\textsuperscript{14}) propositional attitudes, for ASEs are not bipolar.

\textsuperscript{14} An intention that p, or a wish to the effect that p can’t “go false” or “go true” even if p is contingent. But this is because they do not purport to describe how the world is; better put, their “direction of fit” to the world is that the world should fit them. The thesis is that
Nor does the mere determinability of many experiences, as implied by some understandings of Roderick Chisholm’s discussion of the speckled hen, show that experience is propositional.\textsuperscript{15} Suppose I need nine balls to win my straight pool match to 150; I look at the balls on the table and I see the thirteen balls there. If I am not blind, and I take a good look at the whole table, I can hardly help but see the thirteen balls there. Still, the manner of presentation involved in my seeing the thirteen balls may be, in a certain way, merely determinable. The thirteen balls I see may present as “being more than nine in number”. I confidently run out the game without needing to think about how I can set up a break ball to get into the next rack. I know there are enough balls on the table, without thereby knowing the number \( n \) that is the number of balls on the table. The mere determinability of some aspects of experience does not show that experience is a sort of propositional attitude. What does the work is the appeal to modes of presentation, the recognition that intentionality involves objects presenting in a certain manner.

**The Non-Propositional Character of ASEs Doesn’t Make Them Epistemically Inert**

Even those who deny that sensory experience is graced by qualia can be

\textsuperscript{15} Here I am responding to an important complaint that Ernie Sosa made to me at a conference at Brown in 2000 when I defended the view that sensed tropes were the epistemically interesting truthmakers of immediate perceptual belief.
found insisting on the view that there could be no positive epistemic connection between sensory experience and immediate perceptual judgment or immediate perceptual belief. So Donald Davidson claims “Nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief”\(^\text{16}\) and follows up with these remarks:

the relation between a sensation and a belief cannot be logical since sensations are not beliefs or other propositional attitudes. What then is the relation? The answer I think is obvious: the relation is causal. Sensations cause some beliefs and, in this sense, are the basis or ground of those beliefs. But a causal explanation of a belief does not show how or why the belief is justified \(^\text{17}\)

There is no reason to suppose that Davidson thought of the having of sensations as the enjoying of qualia. But even so, he envisages no positive epistemic role for “sensations” to play.

Michael Martin in “The Rational Role of Experience” exploits this kind of consideration, arguing that experience can be inconsistent with belief, and then noting that inconsistency is a logical relation among propositions.\(^\text{18}\) So if experience is to in this way bear on belief then, Martin concludes, it must involve a propositional attitude of some sort. If this line of thought were correct then ASEs would be epistemically inert.


\(^{17}\) Ibid., p 311.

\(^{18}\) Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 93, 1993
Indeed, this kind of consideration, versions of which can be found in Wittgenstein and Wilfred Sellars, leads naturally to what is now the consensus view about experience. Here are the tenets of the consensus view, appropriately dubbed by Alex Byrne “the exing that p” view. 19

(1) There are such things as experiences that are distinct from non-inferential perceptual judgments or the beliefs those judgments lay down. Contrary to David Armstrong’s erstwhile view, having such an experience does not itself involve making the relevant judgment, i.e. it does not involve taking the target of the experience to be the way it is presented. Hence, the now standard account of the “bent” pencil case --- your experience says that (represents it as being the case that) the pencil is bent, but you do not believe or judge that it is.

(2) Having a perceptual experience involves enjoying a prior propositional representation state --- call it “exing that P” --- directed at the content of the experience.

(3) The content of experience is the proposition which involves predicking of the targets of the experience the manners of presentation of those targets (or, what may be more restrictive: predicking of the targets those aspects of the manners of presentation which correspond to how the targets look or appear to be.)

(4) A subject’s perceptual experience is veridical if its propositional content is true of the items in the field the subject is sensing. A subject’s perceptual experience is falsidical if its propositional content is false of the items in the field the subject is sensing. Accordingly, the veridicality of an experience consists in the truth of a propositional attitude.

This view is very widely held; what is a matter of debate is what the admissible contents of experience are, what kind of propositions the distinctive propositional attitude of exing is directed at. We have massive consensus about the existence of exing that p combined with multi-dimensional disagreement about the nature of exing that p. There are unresolved disputes whether it is factive or not, about whether the propositions it represents as true have an articulated content as opposed to
sets of possible worlds *a la* Stalnaker, Lewis and Jackson; about whether the content is conceptual versus non-conceptual (if these are indeed kinds of content), about whether it is singular versus general, about whether it is demonstrative versus purely descriptive, about whether it is Russellian versus Fregean, about whether it is layered in the sense of William Lycan. Then there are disputes about how thin or rich the contents we can ex are. Here I am thinking about the disputes between Alex Byrne and Susanna Siegel on perceptually minimal properties and causation. And there are disputes (say as between Byrne and Christopher Peacocke) about whether and to what extent the contents exed include what it is like for the subject to have the experience in question.

However, we now know that all these views are false, which is not to say that some of the issues they raise won’t still be in play once we see why they are false. Experience constitutively involves ASEs and these cannot be modeled by propositional attitudes directed at what would inevitably be contingent propositions about the external world, because such propositional attitude states would be bipolar, and ASEs are not bipolar.

What then has gone wrong with Martin’s argument, and what is wrong with the idea that only a propositional attitude can bear logically or rationally, and hence epistemically, on another propositional attitude like belief?

It is productive to recognize that something has gone badly wrong with the exing that p view, *even when it is taken on its own terms*, something that is already implicit in Davidson’s remark “Nothing can count as a reason for

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20 In “Why Experience is not Predicative” I argue that ASEs cannot be modeled by propositional attitudes and *something else*; namely a happy mix of causation and description which generates object-directed attitudes from propositional attitudes. The object-directed attitudes can be seen, upon analysis, to be the more basic attitudes.
holding a belief except another belief” (my italics). Roughly, and as a first pass, the problem is this: exing that p was supposed to somehow epistemically ground immediate perceptual belief. But now: Is exing that p believing that p or not? If it is believing that p, then exing that p does not ground immediate perceptual belief, it is immediate perceptual belief, and we are back where we started, namely without an explanation of how experience can confer a virtue on immediate perceptual belief. As I understand him, Byrne clearheadedly adopts this horn of what is in effect the Davidsonian dilemma, and he simply retreats to a reliabilist account of the epistemic virtues that attend (virtuous) immediate perceptual belief. But here, once again, there is nothing crucial in the reliable connection being mediated by sensory awareness, and so we remain at a loss as far as understanding why an insensate being could not arrive at immediate beliefs with the same epistemic virtues as our immediate beliefs. So I direct my complaint to Byrne as well as Davidson.

(By the way, is the following too simple to constitute a problem for the Davidson/Byrne view that the role of experience is just to lay down belief? Often we look again, or listen to the recording again, or sniff the rose again, or taste the Scotch again, or feel the fabric again to ratify a belief we already have acquired on the basis of an experience (an ASE) of the very same type. How does the view that experience does nothing but cause belief account for the epistemic advantage of taking a second look or a second sniff? We often do this to “make sure” but making sure is not making or remaking a belief we already have. If a belief that p is in some doubt, how could it be ratified by a belief that p? Compare Wittgenstein on buying a second copy of the newspaper to check if what you read in the first copy you received is true.)

Suppose instead that exing that p is, as it is intended to be, a
propositional attitude enjoyed by the subject prior to his forming the relevant immediate perceptual belief, an attitude that represents the world as being a certain way without thereby involving the subject in taking the world to be that way. This is a natural construal of the case of the “bent” pencil within the exing that p paradigm. Your experience represents the pencil as bent but you don’t believe it is bent. Now the other horn of the dilemma presses in: how can a propositional attitude that is not, and does not include, a belief or judgment --- that does not involve your taking the world to be a certain way --- rationally bear on what you should believe or judge, rationally bear on how you should take the world to be? On this horn of the dilemma, exing that p seems to be an idle epistemic wheel.

Nor do even more sophisticated propositionalist accounts of experience escape the force of the Davidsonian dilemma. In this context, John McDowell’s account of experience comes to mind. If I understand him correctly, McDowell identifies the relevant propositional attitudes as factive attitudes, attitudes such as seeing that there is a pineapple there and hearing that an Achilles tendon has snapped. This has the clear advantage of identifying the relevant experiential states with propositional attitudes that we actually do report. (The idea of a “long hidden” propositional attitude, exing that p, discovered late in the 20th century, is decidedly odd.) And it clearly gives content to his metaphor of experience as “openness to reality” since he goes on to identify the facts in question as ingredients of reality. (“The world is the totality of facts, not of things.”)

Notice that it is not easy to find the relevant factive attitude that captures my experience in the “bent” pencil case. It can’t be (or include) the attitude of seeing that the pencil is bent, since the pencil is not bent. It can’t be
its seeming to me that the pencil is bent, since that is not a factive attitude. Here is a factive attitude: knowing on the basis on vision and immediate reflection that it appears to me that the pencil is bent. But now imagine the case this way: the subject is encountering his first standard visual illusion and knows nothing of them. Why in that case would he form such a defensive higher-order reflective attitude directed upon appearances? Is that at all psychologically realistic? No, the thought must be the now familiar “disjunctivist” thought; while in a veridical case the attitude is factive, e.g. seeing that the pineapple is there, in a falsidical (illusory or hallucinatory) case the attitude involves a mere seeming, e.g. that the/a pencil is bent. Earl Connee, among others, has put considerable pressure on the epistemic credentials of this disjunctivist position, but I am not in a position to fully adjudicate that dispute here. 21

However, and this is the main point at this juncture, McDowell’s factive attitudes are just the wrong propositional attitudes to take as the epistemically relevant experiential starting points in the veridical case. Take a veridical case, where I see that there is a pineapple there. Is this the place to start in explaining how experience could epistemically bear on immediate (i.e. non-inferential) belief or judgment? No, the consensus of forty years of work on such factive attitudes, from Roderick Chisholm on through Frank Jackson and Fred Dretske to Alex Hyslop, is that once we put aside one kind of disputed case, involving inattention or not noticing what I am seeing, then

21 Earl Connee “Disjunctivism and Anti-Skepticism” Philosophical Issues 17 (1):16–36, 2007. As Connee emphasizes, the epistemic prospects of this kind of disjunctivism depend in part on whether it can detach itself from the implausible denial of the “common factor” and embrace some such view of hallucination as that presented in my “The Obscure Object of Hallucination” Philosophical Studies, 120, 2004; reprinted in Alex Byrne and Heather Logue eds. Disjunctivism: Touching Reality (MIT Press, 2006).
seeing that a is F constitutively involves taking a to be F.

That is not so with ASEs like seeing the F-ness of a. I can see the location of the pineapple without taking it to be in that location, as when I wrongly think I am looking into a mirror. Nor does seeing a as F require my taking it to be F. I can see the pencil as bent without taking it as bent, as when I am very familiar with the visually distorting effects of water. However, I cannot be counted as attentively seeing that there is a pineapple there without having taken it that there is a pineapple there, so my seeing that there is a pineapple there cannot be the epistemic ground of my taking there to be a pineapple there. So McDowell’s epistemology does not escape Davidson’s dilemma, and it does not provide what we have been looking for all along; namely, an account of experience that would rationalize or legitimate just such takings, beliefs or judgments.

To summarize, not only is there something wrong with the whole exing that p tradition, there must be something wrong with Martin’s argument to the effect that in recognizing the epistemic role of experience we should postulate a representational propositional attitude, prior to belief or judgment. Yet, Martin’s argument was a simple one: experience can be inconsistent with belief, and inconsistency is a logical relation among propositions. So if experience is to bear on belief in this way it must involve a propositional attitude of some sort. But experience is not belief, it is somehow prior to, or at least can occur without, belief. So we are (wrongly) led to postulate a propositional attitude that captures the content of experience but which does not involve taking the world to be a certain way.

The reply to Martin’s argument is that there are different kinds of inconsistency. As things stand, I do not believe in ghosts. It is a pretty
entrenched view, which comes from looking at the evidence from psychical research and the study of near death experiences, from thinking about the mind-body relation, and from appreciating Spinoza’s sharp point that it is curious fact that most apparitions are of people fully clothed. (It is one thing to believe in spiritual bodies, quite another to believe in spiritual clothes, boots, belts, gloves and hats.) Suppose however that there are ghosts, and I happen to see one. Then my experience, simply understood as the attentive sensory episode of my seeing a ghost, is in a certain way inconsistent with my belief that there are no ghosts. This remains so even if I am in denial (as I probably would be), and do not take the ghost’s look to be the look of a ghost, and so do not see it as a ghost, and so cannot be credited with seeing that there is a ghost there, or judging that there is a ghost there, or believing that there is a ghost there. The sheer attentive sensory episode of my seeing a ghost is in a certain way inconsistent with my belief that there are no ghosts.

It is relatively easy to say what that inconsistency comes to if we allow ourselves the idea of a truthmaker for a proposition. (That idea has come in for some criticism, but most of the criticism is directed at versions of the idea that I too reject. For example, there is obviously a need to have a conception of truthmaking that is more discriminating than the modal conception, which has it that x is a truthmaker for p iff it is necessary that if x exists then p is true.) Armed with the idea of truthmaking, we can say that the object of my ASE, namely a particular ghost, is a truthmaker for the proposition that there are ghosts. This proposition is logically inconsistent with what I believe, namely that there are no ghosts.

What goes for logical inconsistency also goes for logical support. Suppose a child has no view about the existence of ghosts, one way or another.
The child sees a ghost. There is a certain way in which the child’s attentive sensory episode logically supports the proposition that there are ghosts. What the child sees, namely a particular ghost, is a truthmaker for the proposition that there are ghosts.

Recall Mary’s tasting the astringency of the calvados. The object of this ASE is what some would call a “trope”, in part to distinguish it from the fact that the calvados is astringent. (The terminology is innocent enough, so long as we are not thereby committing ourselves to some specific theory of tropes, let alone trying to advance the cause of a certain sort of “resemblance nominalism” by identifying properties with functions from worlds to classes of resembling tropes.) There is a certain way in which Mary’s attentive sensory episode logically supports the proposition that the calvados is astringent. What she tasted, namely, the astringency of the calvados, is the truthmaker for the proposition that the calvados is astringent.

It is important to enter a caveat here; these logical or quasi-logical relations of truthmaking are not themselves relations of epistemic legitimation or entitlement. Without the subject’s recognition, or potential recognition, of the holding of such relations between sensed truthmakers and what he or she goes on to immediately judge there is nothing interesting happening on the side of earning the right to a belief.

**The Global Virtue**

Still, one worthwhile observation is this. Characteristically, when someone does make a novel immediate perceptual judgment, that person is also enjoying an attentive sensory episode directed at a truthmaker of what he
or she has judged. That is, immediate perceptual judgments are characteristically formed alongside the sensed presence of their truthmakers.

This in itself is of considerable epistemic significance; for it entails that immediate perceptual judgments are characteristically true. When we take an external perspective on our epistemic efforts, whether we are foundationalists or local coherentists, we notice that the starting points for many of our inferences are beliefs of a kind for which truth is characteristic. At least we notice this if we have taken the ASEs, and hence sensory awareness, seriously.

Recall Davidson's own epistemological enterprise both in the paper quoted earlier and elsewhere. As a self-confessed coherentist, he wanted to find a set of considerations that would show that beliefs in general are characteristically true. Otherwise, we face the worry that our whole system of belief, though internally coherent, floats free of reality; a worry made vivid by the thought of many conflicting but equally consistent systems of belief. Davidson thus resorted to his own account of radical interpretation, and gave an argument like this.

If you have a belief you have a whole system of belief.

If you have a whole system of belief then an omniscient interpreter would be able to interpret you as believing those things you do in fact believe.

But a necessary condition on being able to be interpreted as having a whole system of belief is exhibiting massive or at least significant overlap with the beliefs of the interpreter.
So we must exhibit massive or at least significant overlap with the beliefs of an omniscient interpreter.

All of the omniscient interpreter’s beliefs are true.

So our beliefs are, in massive or at least significant part, true.

Notice that although Davidson is adopting an external perspective on our system of belief and trying to vindicate it, he is not here arguing for some version of reliabilism. He is not arguing that our beliefs are reliably formed, and hence mostly true. There could be a deep conceptual problem with the way in which the shifty idea of reliability is ordinarily deployed, and yet, if Davidson’s argument worked we still would be in a position to say that belief in general had the following virtue: it is characteristically true. And when we take an external perspective on our system of belief, we can see that as an *epistemic* virtue; for many of the starting points for our inferences will be true beliefs. So long as our system of belief is tightly connected by good inferential patterns, truth can be expected to propagate through that system. Coherence plus the relevant virtue that Davidson’s argument presents belief as having together provide a deep kind of epistemic reassurance.

Unfortunately, Davidson’s argument does not work. One of his two pivotal premises is false.

If you have a whole system of belief then an omniscient interpreter would be able to interpret you as believing those things you do in fact
believe.

But a necessary condition on being able to be interpreted as having a whole system of belief is exhibiting massive or at least significant overlap with the beliefs of the interpreter.

One way to see this is to notice that massive or at least significant overlap in belief, when combined with some completion of other conditions such as the interpreter’s resourcefulness, focus, intelligence, available time and the like, forms a sufficient condition for successful interpretation of another. Suppose then that all the planets are inhabited by beings with systems of belief, and there is massive or at least significant overlap between the systems of belief had on adjacent planets. (Surely this is a possible circumstance!) The omniscient interpreter lives on Neptune and he can interpret the Uranian, so the Uranian has a system of belief. The Uranian can interpret the Saturnian, so the Saturnian has a system of belief. The Saturnian can interpret the Jupiterian, so the Jupiterian has a system of belief. The Jupiterian can interpret the Martian, so the Martian has a system of belief. And so on, until we get to the Mercurian, who also has a system of belief. But since massive or significant overlap in belief is not a transitive relation, all of the above could be true while it remains the case that there is no massive or significant overlap in belief between the Uranian and the Mercurian; let alone between the omniscient interpreter on Neptune and the Mercurian.

It follows that either the Mercurian has a system of belief that the omniscient interpreter is not in a position to interpret, or massive or at least significant overlap in belief is not a necessary condition for interpretation.
Either way, one of Davidson’s two pivotal premises is false in this possible model. So together they cannot show that it could not be the case that a coherent system of belief is massively false.\textsuperscript{22}

Instead of aiming for the more general claim that belief is characteristically true, we can get the kind of epistemic reassurance that Davidson was (rightly) looking for by way of the claim that \textit{immediate perceptual} belief is characteristically true. And that claim looks very plausible when we take sensory awareness, and hence the attentive sensory episodes, seriously. For once we do that, we can’t help but notice that immediate perceptual beliefs are characteristically formed alongside ASEs directed at their truthmakers.

Of course, the full defense of this last claim depends on the claim that our ASEs are not massively illusory or hallucinatory. Here too, I think I can be helpful in explaining why we should think this, but that is the burden of \textit{The Manifest} and its central argument that consistent, coherent and intersubjectively available appearances make for a common, though far from unique and exhaustive, reality.

\textbf{How Does Sensing Confer a Virtue on Individual Beliefs?}

So far I have discussed how matters stand when we take a perspective

\textsuperscript{22} When I first gave this argument at NYU in 1987, Susan Hurley then wrote up a very useful discussion of it, which has subsequently appeared, but her discussion does not focus on the way in which the little model disables Davidson’s master argument. Hurley suggests that we understand interpretability as the ancestral of immediate interpretability and so cease to require massive overlap as a necessary condition on interpretability. That is fine as far as it goes, but there is then no reason to believe that being interpretable by the omniscient interpreter implies that many of our beliefs are true.
on our system of belief as a whole. This leaves the question of whether at the level of particular episodes, a subject enjoying ASEs thereby has, occasion by occasion, a license to believe the propositions that correspond to the truthmakers that are the objects of her ASEs; a license that is not possessed by someone who is enjoying hallucinatory or illusory ASEs that lead her to mistakenly think that she is believing propositions which correspond to the truthmakers that are the objects of his ASEs.

There might be a county that requires a fishing license to fish, but does not require that you have it on your person at the lake or stream. It is enough, when challenged by the game warden, to be able to go back home and get the license. It takes a little trouble to do this, and the game warden gets a little irritated at you, but you are not in violation of the law. Now suppose that in this county someone is forging licenses; he is a very good forger, and to the naked eye these forged licenses are indistinguishable from the genuine licenses, possession of which confers on its holder the right to fish within the county. The law does not say that you have the right to fish if you either have a genuine license or a forged license that is to the naked eye indistinguishable from a genuine license. The law requires that you have a genuine license in order to fish. However, in apportioning penalties, the law recognizes that someone innocently conned by the license forger might be in a certain way blameless. He might be utterly conscientious, he might have tried as hard as could to get a genuine license, he may just be an unlucky, unwitting victim. So the penalties for fishing without a license are regularly waived in such cases.

There are different sorts of virtues which various kinds of fisherpersons might exhibit. There is a very conscientious and nervous kind of person who will never go out to fish without a genuine license sticking out of his or her top
pocket, where it is clearly visible to all. This person has the right to fish, and has the abiding sense of the license that confers that right being there, present, on his or her person, while he or she fishes. Then there is the more relaxed kind of person, who fishes and has a genuine license somewhere at home, which he or she could go and get, if challenged. This may irritate the game warden, but his or her fishing is no less legal than the very conscientious person’s fishing. Then there is the hapless variant of the relaxed kind of person, a person who is the unlucky, unwitting victim of the forger, and has but a forged license at home.

The second and third types of person are, along one dimension of blamelessness, equally blameless. Neither deserves a penalty from the law. But the account of why this is so differs in the two cases. The second type of person has obeyed the law and has no case to answer, whereas the third type of person has broken the law but should be exculpated because he is an innocent and unwitting victim. Of course, the game warden, having surveyed the proffered piece of paper under a magnifying glass, may say to a second type of person “You do not have a valid license!” and he may say this in a stern and blaming tone. But once all the facts are in, the blaming tone would be misplaced; it then would be blaming the victim.

A strategy worth exploring is to use the already canvassed facts concerning ASEs and immediate perceptual belief to explain how we are analogs of the second sort of person, and thereby show how an account of justification as epistemic blamelessness, one which focuses on the epistemic analog of what the second and third sort of person have in common, omits the crucial epistemic virtue of having a genuine license, namely enjoying ASEs whose objects genuinely are truthmakers for the associated immediate
perceptual judgments. When challenged as to our right to believe what we immediately believe on the basis of perception we can then cite the accompanying ASEs as our license.

There is however a temptation to go further, a temptation that is at work in the tradition from Edmund Husserl, through C. I. Lewis down to Richard Fumerton, namely to use the sort of facts we have already canvassed to portray us as epistemic analogs of the first kind of fisherperson, the person who actually checks that he or she has the license in hand before going fishing.23 (I myself have been guilty of giving into this temptation in an earlier paper “Better the Mere Knowledge: The Function of Sensory Awareness”.)

On Fumerton’s view an immediate (non-inferential) perceptual belief is formed out of (i) acquaintance with the fact that p and (ii) acquaintance with the proposition that p and (iii) acquaintance with the truthmaking correspondence or match between the two. These three acts of acquaintance then enable the subject to form a non-inferential belief that p, in a condition in which the subject can rest content that the belief is true. The subject moves from knowing possession of the truthmaker to belief in the proposition made true. It is important that these acts of acquaintance are forms of non-doxastic awareness, otherwise there would be too many beliefs piling up before an immediate perceptual belief is formed.24


Though in “Better Than Mere Knowledge: The Function of Sensory Awareness” I endorse the same general picture of movement from the awareness of a truthmaker to believing the proposition made true, there are many differences of detail between my view and Fumerton’s. As I understand him, Fumerton is an internalist about justification; he holds that my recently envatted brain duplicate and I would share the very same justifications for our beliefs, and he is not attempting to explain the epistemically defective character of my recently envatted brain duplicate. The relevant truthmaking facts are, for him, narrowly supervening facts about inner mental life, whereas for me they are the objects of ASEs, most of which are items in the external world.

Then there is a further difference between us when it comes to ontology; facts are not the relevant truthmakers. Our thought and talk is bound up with reference to both exemplifications of features ("tropes" if you like, with the caveats entered earlier) and facts. A horse’s beauty is not the same as that horse being beautiful, you can object-see the first but not the second, and being impressed by the horse’s beauty need not be the same thing as being impressed by the fact that it is beautiful. Similarly, being surprised by a Chinese flag’s red is not the same as being surprised by a Chinese flag being red. (The latter indicates ignorance of the flags of the world, the former need not.) Tropes can enter in comparisons in ways that the corresponding facts cannot. The horse’s beauty can be more impressive than the horse’s speed. We say a different thing when we say that the fact that the horse is beautiful is more impressive than the fact that the horse is speedy. (These kinds of considerations, rightly in my view, lead Friederike Moltmann to conclude that the tropes are less abstract items than the corresponding properties and facts,
where facts are understood as items having properties.\textsuperscript{25}

Facts can be taken to be either items having properties or, alternatively, true propositions. True propositions are not ingredients of external concrete reality, and properties as opposed to the features that properties are the havings of, are abstract semantic values for predicates and certain gerundive designators ("being white", "having mass"), and not ingredients of external reality. There is the feature or quality or shade cherry-red-13 and the property of being cherry-red-13. The feature or quality or shade cherry-red-13 does not have more determinate versions (we may assume) but the property of being cherry-red-13 may well have more determinate versions, for example the property of being surface cherry-red-13, and the property of being radiant cherry-red-13, and the property of being volume cherryred-13. There is one determinate shade cherry-red-13 and three ways of having it, namely as a surface color, as a radiant color and as a volume color. Many more considerations could be added to distinguish qualities, shapes, magnitudes etc. from the associated properties. (Properties cannot be multiplied, but magnitudes can, etc., etc.)

Once properties are distinguished from the more basic predicable “features”, i.e. qualities, shapes, magnitudes, locations etc., then it will be relatively obvious that the more concrete items are the exemplifications of features (tropes if you like) rather than items having properties. Herein lies the ontological problem with John McDowell’s cashing out of the metaphor of “openness to [concrete] reality” in terms of attitudes directed at facts. If facts are true propositions then concrete reality contains none of them, and if facts

\textsuperscript{25} “Properties and Kinds of Tropes: New Linguistic facts and Old Philosophical Insights” Mind 113 2005 “Degree Structure as Trope Structure” Linguistics and Philosophy 32 (1)
are items having properties, then these are more abstract than the feature exemplifications which make up our immediate perceptual world. That world is not a totality of facts, but of things; it includes at least the vast variety of things cited earlier as the objects of the ASEs. The same difficulty attends Fumerton’s idea that our epistemically relevant sensory starting points are acts of acquaintance with facts.

Then there is an issue that might either lead us to make different predictions from Fumerton about which immediate beliefs are justified, or lead Fumerton to further elaborate his account. Fumerton treats his kind of non-doxastic awareness not as object-directed sensory intentionality, the relation common to the ASEs, but as acquaintance, and he appears to be following Russell in thinking of acquaintance as a two-place relation between a subject and various kinds of objects; that is, facts in general, propositions, and certain special facts involving relations of matching holding between facts and propositions. However, the relation of sensory intentionality constitutive of ASEs is not acquaintance so conceived. It is a three-place relation of an item presenting to a subject in a certain mode or manner. As Russell himself noted, a two place relation of awareness between a subject and something that is not a proposition (e.g. a fact as Fumerton understands them) cannot be true or false; nor can it be in any way illusory. But some ASEs are illusions. Think of an innocent looking at the “bent” pencil. What makes one of the ASEs he is enjoying illusory is this: the item that is the object of that ASE, e.g. the pencil, fails to match the mode of presentation that is constitutive of the ASE, the three-dimensional curved shape.²⁶

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²⁶ Similarly, quality tropes can present in misleading qualitative ways. Talk of qualitative manners of presentation of quality-tropes might sound like counting the qualitative twice;
This point about the crucial role of manners of presentation carries over to issues about entitlement to belief. Recall the straight pool case, where I need nine balls to get to 150, and I see the thirteen balls on the table, but they present to me simply as more than nine balls. Am I not acquainted with the thirteen balls? I am looking right at them. Suppose then that for some reason, the proposition that there are thirteen balls pops into my mind, so that I am also acquainted with it. Why can’t I also now be acquainted with the match between the fact that there are the thirteen balls there and the now very salient proposition that there are thirteen balls there? If I can, I would then (by Fumerton’s lights) be fully justified in going on to judge that there are thirteen balls there. But I do not have the right to judge that there are thirteen balls there. The reason is that there is a particular visual manner of presentation or look, the merely determinable “more than nine balls look”, which is constitutive of the ASE I am enjoying, and which does not entitle me to believe the more determinate true claim that there are thirteen balls there.

Of course, Fumerton could accept this as the explanation of why one cannot be acquainted with the match between the truthmaker and the proposition judged, and extend his account accordingly. The lesson would then be that there is more involved in generating the right to believe than acquaintance with truthmakers; the judgment in question has to be sensitive to how things look; more generally, to how things sensorily present.

Alternatively, Fumerton might say something like the following. In the

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but think for example of presented shape and of its two qualitatively different manners of presentation, in sight and touch. The shape of my bike, that trope or condition of my bike, presents as to sight as the shape of a locus of discontinuity with respect to color, and it presents to touch as the shape of a locus of felt resistance to probing. Even the qualities proper to each sense can present in a variety of qualitative ways: a uniform patch of white can present as shaded here and illuminated there. The same whiteness of the wall is
case at hand, one is not acquainted with the fact that there are thirteen balls on the table; one is only acquainted with the fact that there are more than nine balls on the table. The only proposition that one is acquainted with that matches that fact is the proposition that there are more than nine balls on the table. This is why one has the right to immediately judge that there are more than nine balls on the table and does not have the right to immediately judge that there are thirteen balls on the table.

That is also perfectly fair as far as it goes. But I also know some old-time straight pool players who just see the number of balls on the table as the number it is; when there are thirteen balls on the table at least one of the looks of the array on the table is the look of a thirteen ball array, and they recognize a look of that sort as such. (It is quite a sensory skill; most of us can’t get past five or six.) In such circumstances, they would have the right to judge that there are thirteen balls on the table.

Again, Fumerton could accommodate this by saying that they are acquainted with the fact that there are thirteen balls on the table. Again, a perfectly fair response; but isn’t it now clear that what is determining just which facts subjects are acquainted with is how things look to them (which looks of things they recognize as such). So once again, the full account of our right to make this or that immediate perceptual judgment must be sensitive to how things look; more generally, to how things sensorily present.

Of course, the kind of case I have described concerns a pool table with balls on it; these are, in the quaint phrase, “in the external world”, and Fumerton might insist with Russell that we are never acquainted with ordinary items in the external world. This would naturally fit with Fumerton’s presented in two different qualitative ways, as between here and there.
epistemological internalism. Not to worry, all this could be mental straight pool, going on in the mind of an eidetic imager. All we need is a layer of mental life where there is still an appearance/reality distinction available, where there is room for illusion, i.e. a coming apart of what is presented from how it is presented, and so a role for the how of presentation to play.

Perhaps when we get to pure qualities simply presented without contrasting surrounds, as in the brain grey case, the distinction between presented appearance and reality may idle, and there may be no real chance of illusion. But notice three things here. These are very impoverished cases, they are not the typical topics of our immediate perceptual beliefs, and there is little chance of building up any significant world-picture from beliefs restricted to such special cases.

I have argued that if one wants to give an account of how subjects might legitimately get from the ASEs to the corresponding immediate perceptual beliefs, which most often concern the world around us, then the emphasis has to be on the subject moving from a truthmaker to a proposition made true by going by how things look, or more generally by how they sensorily present. And that will raise the obvious question of whether subjects who go by how things look, and hence employ their standing recognitional capacities that are sensitive to how things look, are taking looks to be of certain sorts, e.g. to be the look of more than nine balls. And if so, aren't these takings very close to judgments or beliefs, which also characteristically involve taking things to be thus and so. Even if we deny these takings the name of “judgment” or “belief” have we not arrived at an epistemological position that is more like a local coherentism about “immediate” perceptual belief than like foundationalism?27

27A taking has a “direction of fit” akin to a belief or judgment; a taking of x to be F is correct
For this reason, I myself would depart from Fumerton’s account even in respect of its foundationalist claims.

To summarize, the useful idea of sensory awareness as presenting the truthmakers for what we collaterally immediately judge (an idea that goes back to Husserl) can be detached from the idea of acquaintance with facts, and from internalism (both ontic and epistemological), and from foundationalism. It can also, as we shall see, be detached from the idea of subjects actually proceeding from sensory awareness of truthmakers to the formation of the corresponding immediate perceptual beliefs.

**Going By How Things Look**

An account of how subjects might *legitimately get from* the ASEs to immediate perceptual beliefs by going by how things look, or more generally by how they sensorily present, can be understood in two ways. It can be understood as an empirical speculation at the level of how our personal and sub-personal belief-forming systems in part operate. Here the “might” in “might legitimately get from” is epistemic, and is a bit like “perhaps”.

Alternatively, the account could be understood as a possibility proof that it is doable in principle. Here the “might” concerns what is metaphysically possible. The latter sort of project may be compared to the idea of a theory of meaning as Michael Dummett and Donald Davidson, in some moods, understood that enterprise. A theory of meaning for a language L, Dummett said, was to be a theoretical representation of a practical ability; an account of that, knowledge of which would *suffice* to speak L. There was no intended

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\text{iff } x \text{ is } F.
\]
suggestion that in learning their own language, L-speakers actually grasped say, a truth theory for L constructed in the situation of the radical interpreter (Davidson’s favored account), let alone a theory of warranted assertibility for L, paralleling Arend Heyting’s intuitionist semantics for arithmetic (Dummett’s favored account).

Noam Chomsky is reported as having delivered a numbing rhetorical, and perhaps more than rhetorical, blow to this idea of a theory of meaning as an account of what would suffice to speak a language. Here is the numbing blow: Suppose you are interested in how chickens lay eggs. There are two quite different intellectual enterprises you could go in for. In the first, you give an account that is not meant to be “physiologically realistic”; you aim for a possibility proof, you simply set out what would suffice for a chicken to lay an egg. The second intellectual enterprise is to empirically investigate the physiology of chickens’ laying eggs, to actually find out how they do that odd thing. In the second enterprise you can actually find something out, other than how inventive you can be. After all, you knew all along that it was possible that chickens lay eggs.

A variant on Chomsky’s worry has some traction in the present context. Suppose we understand the account of how subjects might legitimately get from the ASEs to immediate perceptual beliefs as a mere possibility proof. What is the epistemic significance of that, if there is no associated suggestion that this is really the way that subjects in fact do it? Indeed, if there is no suggestion that this is really the way we do it, a quite distinct epistemic picture, one which uses the same materials but in a different way, appears much more interesting than the sheer possibility proof. We should instead think of the justifying steps mentioned in the account as available to subjects
in *post hoc ratifications* of their immediate perceptual beliefs. That is, we should think of the “licensing” steps, say --- attending to the truthmaker, and how it looks, and so recognizing that it is thus well-characterized by a particular proposition that one believes or is inclined to believe --- not as things subjects personally or sub-personally do in leading up to their immediate perceptual beliefs, but as things they could do when they find their immediate perceptual beliefs challenged.

In this way, we represent subjects as more like the second kind of fisherperson than like the first kind; there is a license subjects *can* produce if they find their immediate perceptual beliefs challenged, or if they find themselves in a particularly reflective epistemic mood; but they did not check, either personally or sub-personally, to determine if they had that license before they arrived at their immediate perceptual beliefs.

I propose to argue for this “ratificationist” picture in the following way. First, I will set out in detail what it would take for subjects to *legitimately get from* the ASEs to immediate perceptual beliefs by going by how things look. I will then argue that I would have no business putting this forward as an empirical speculation in cognitive science.

**The Steps**

Consider what goes wrong with adventitously true “out of the blue” judgments. Maud is in a hot, overcrowded room. She sees the overcrowdedness of the room, but that feature of the room does not “pop out” for her, she does not see the room *as* overcrowded; perhaps this is because she is flustered by the heat. If she goes on to judge “out of the blue” that the room
is overcrowded, then this judgment, although true, is without (any further) epistemic value. In arriving at this judgment, she has not gone by how things looked, that is, by the looks which she visually discriminated. We might suppose that the lesson is that the move from the truthmaker that is the object of an ASE, e.g. Maud’s seeing the overcrowdedness of the room, to the belief in the proposition made true, in this case the proposition that the room is overcrowded, is legitimate only if it is mediated by appreciation of the appropriate look.

Or suppose that Tweedledum and Tweedledee are before me and Tweedledee is, unbeknownst to me, on my right. I cannot recognize any look of the one or of the other that distinguishes one of them as Tweedledee. Accordingly, I don’t see either one of them as Tweedledee. And I don’t see either one of them as Tweedledum. But I do recognize them together as having the look of the famous identical twins; and so I see them together as Tweedledum and Tweedledee.
Now consider these two propositions, which I might come to believe

Tweedledum and Tweedledee are standing before me.
Tweedledee is on my right.

On the basis of my visual experience I am entitled to come to believe the first proposition, but not the second. However, the truthmakers of both propositions are there in the scene before my eyes. I can be said to see the location L that is the location of Tweedledee, even if I do not see L as the
location of Tweedledee. And I see the location L* that is the location of Tweedledum, even if I do not see L* as the location of Tweedledum. I see the location of Tweedledee relative to my position; even though I do not see that location as the location of Tweedledee relative to my position. We may suppose that I entertain the second proposition as well as the first, so why can’t I see or be acquainted with the truthmaking match between

The proposition that Tweedledee is on my right
and
The position of Tweedledee relative to me, namely his rightwardness-relative to me

and so be justified in believing that Tweedledee is on the right?

The answer seems to be that I don’t see Tweedledee’s position relative to me, namely, his rightwardness relative to me, as his rightwardness relative to me. And this is because I don’t see the person in that relative position as Tweedledee. And this is because I am unable to discriminate any look of Tweedledee that distinguishes him from his twin.

Again, the apparent lesson is that the move from an ASE, say my seeing the rightwardness of Tweedledee, to belief in the corresponding proposition, which the object of the ASE makes true, namely that Tweedledee is on the right, is legitimate only if it is mediated in the right way by an appreciation of the looks of things.

What exactly do I mean when I say that in moving from the truthmaker that is the object of an ASE, say the redness of the pineapple, to the appropriate immediate perceptual belief, say the belief that the pineapple is
red, one needs to go by how things look, or more generally by how they appear or present in the various acts of sensory awareness that are the ASEs?

The first thing to note is that we can inspect how things look, smell, feel, taste, sound, etc. In doing this we are not introspecting our inner condition, but performing particular ASEs, which involve focusing on the manners of presentation of objects of other ASEs. I can attend to how my hand looks from here; this is a relational condition of my hand, and if I want to draw my hand in a realistic fashion, I need to focus on such looks. Among the things we can visually attend to are the looks of things, as we can attend in the appropriate way to their sounds, tastes, textures, smells, and so on. For many a concept that can be deployed in perceptual judgment, deploying that concept requires a knowledge of the range of characteristic looks had by the things that fall under the concept. You don’t have a concept of a dog that can figure in immediate perceptual judgment if you don’t know what dogs look or sound or feel or smell like, if you don’t have a recognitional ability directed at the range of “doggy” looks, sounds, textures and smells.

What a dog looks like is a standing matter of fact. As the existence and intersubjective interest of paintings, pictures and other representations of dogs testifies, what a dog looks like is not a private item. Such standing looks are publicly available, and are always being visually discriminated as conditions of seeing things, and seeing them as F, and seeing them as of some kind or other.

Seeing something as a dog, involves seeing something (which may or may not be a dog), visually discriminating its particular look, and taking that look to be one of the looks of a dog. Crucially, unlike seeing that there is a dog there, it does not involve taking the thing you see to be a dog. Recall the “bent”
pencil case: you see it as bent, even though you don’t see that it is bent; it is not bent and you don’t take it to be bent. Still you visually discriminate its bent look, and you do take that to be the look of a bent item. You have made a commitment on the classification of the pencil’s look, but you have made no commitment on the classification of its shape.

McDowell gives this example: a tie looks green to Maud, but she declines to take it to be green because of what strikes her as suspicious lighting conditions. McDowell says she did in fact see that it was green, but did not realize that it was green. I agree with Gerald Vision when he says that McDowell has misclassified this example. Vision says “She saw the green tie, but didn’t realize that it was green; she should have seen that it was green but she did not.” Vision seems entirely correct here. Depending on the case, Maud might have distrusted any classification of the look of the tie as the look of a green tie. Her awareness of the exceptional lighting may have made her hesitate. Even though the tie looked green to her, she was not in a position to take that look to be the look of a green tie in the circumstances of lighting. If that is the case, she did not even see the tie as green. And that is plausibly taken to be a necessary condition of seeing that the tie is green.

McDowell’s misclassification of this case may be connected with the fact that his epistemology starts too late to explain the epistemic function of sensory awareness. Seeing that the tie is green is not prior to, and not a potential source of, taking the tie to be green. It already involves taking the tie to be green. Taking the tie to be green is not something else I should do after I have seen that the tie is green. It is something I have already done.

Seeing, Seeing as and Seeing that

We can now appreciate a second thing that is wrong with a flip response to the challenge to explain what is *per se* epistemically defective about the condition of a latter day zombie, a recently envatted brain, or a perfect blindsighter is inadequate. The flip response is that they can’t, say, *see that* there is a pineapple there because they don’t *see* the pineapple there. The first thing was that even if none of these impoverished subjects can *see that* there is a pineapple there, this is just one determinate form of knowledge, and for all we have been told, these impoverished subjects may have their own determinate substitute for this form of knowledge. (Remember the earlier reflections about how the latter day zombies could meet the standards of reliability and justification.) But the second thing is that the flip response simply invites the question of just how seeing actually bears on seeing that, and of whether the relation has any epistemic significance.

A way into this is to recall two issues associated with idioms such as “seeing that” and “hearing that”, the issue of specifying the “genuinely sensory” use of such idioms and the issue of their opacity. Chisholm, in an early detailed discussion of such idioms, notes that their most natural use is *not* to report the upshot of sensing, but of being persuaded that such and such is the case or of being told that such and such is the case, as in “I see that I was wrong about Clinton” or “I hear that you are off to Minneapolis”. Such idioms *can* also be used to characterize immediate perceptual beliefs that are based on ASEs associated with the operation of the sensory capacities of vision and

audition, but is it not part of the meaning of such idioms that the beliefs in question are so associated. So a focus on idioms such as “seeing that” and “hearing that” is not itself a focus on an inherently sensory contribution to our epistemic situation.

As we have noted (or seen), a genuinely sensory case of seeing that or hearing that is one that involves (i) an objectual-seeing or an objectual-hearing, or more generally an ASE, (ii) an act of seeing as or hearing as, or more generally the construal of an appearance as an appearance of a certain type, and (iii) a corresponding immediate perceptual belief whose content is made true by the object of the relevant ASE.

Then there is the issue about opacity. Our immediate perceptual beliefs are naturally reported by way of linguistic constructions of the form “S believes that a is F”. These constructions exhibit opacity, i.e. you can’t substitute into the position held by “a” or “F” on the basis of identity. The same with constructions like “S sees that a is F” and “S hears that a is F” even when they are used to characterize a genuinely sensory case. If what marks off the genuinely sensory case are the ASEs, then were left with this question: reports of ASE are not opaque in their subject or object position, how then does the opacity of immediate perceptual belief arise?

The issue may be dramatized in this way. Suppose Madeline sees the overcrowding of the Oval Office, so she sees the overcrowding of Swami Bata’s favorite meditation site. But if she went on to immediately judge that Swami Bata’s favorite meditation site was overcrowded, this judgment would be without epistemic value (besides adventitious truth). She can visually discriminate the room’s Oval Office-look and take it to be an Oval Office-look, but she cannot visually discriminate the site’s being-favored-by Swami Bata-
above-all-others-for-meditation-look and take it to be such. There is no such look, and even if there were she is not in a position to take it to be such a look. This is why she cannot, just in virtue of sensing, see the room as Swami B’s favorite site for meditation. This, one might think, is how reports of “seeing as” get to be opaque, and one might be led therefore to think that this accounts for the resultant opacity of reports of immediate perceptual belief.

**The Details of the “Legitimate” Move and the Problem**

As a result of the explorations of these last two sections, we are naturally led to the following kind of detailed picture of the differential contribution of the ASEs and of seeing as in the epistemically good and bad cases:

**The Good Case** (The immediate judgment formed out of awareness of its truthmaker, thanks to the subject’s visually discriminating the target and some relevant looks, and then properly classifying those looks.)

I see the F-ness of a *(a trope, not a fact or obtaining state of affairs)*
I see a as a...I see a, and I visually discriminate a’s a-ish look and take it to be an a-ish look.
I see a as F... I see a, and I visually discriminate x’s F-ish look and take it to be an F-ish look.
I go by how things look.
And *so I come to* truly believe that a is F
**The Bad Case** (The case of illusion or the encounter with a misleading scene.)

I see the F*-ness of a, where F* is not F, and a is not F.
I see a as a...I see a and I visually discriminate a’s a-ish look and take it to be an a-ish look.
I see a as F... I see a, and I visually discriminate one of a’s looks and I take it to be an F-ish look.
I go by how things look
And so I come to wrongly believe that a is F

*The only problem is that I don’t actually remember having gone through any such steps, ever in my life.* (The same could be said, with equal justice, about Fumerton’s three acts of acquaintance.) It is rather that I sense my environment and I have immediate perceptual beliefs. Of course, the very next thought is that these steps are somehow happening at the sub-personal level, so that, for example, the visual system is operating on looks and sub-personally classifying them as looks of certain sorts. The hope would then be that we could find some evidence for this in the sub-personal details of the various visual agnosias.

However, that is just a very adventurous, not to say foolhardy, hypothesis in cognitive science. To revert to the Fumerton model: Is the sub-personal visual/cognitive system somehow employing the notion of a truthmaker?

That is just not the sort of thing you can earn the right to suppose by doing ontology, philosophy of mind and epistemology in the way I have been
doing them here. One dramatic way of making that point is that for all we
know, cognitive science could come to discover that ASEs and immediate
perceptual beliefs are co-effects of a common cause. There would then be no
process of moving from ASEs and patterns of sensing as to immediate
perceptual belief. There then would be no such way of correctly marking the
epistemic difference between the good and bad cases. We would have been
entertaining a fantasy about just what the special epistemic virtue conferred
on immediate perceptual belief by sensory awareness was.

Is the existence of the neglected epistemic virtue in this way hostage to
the discoveries of cognitive science? I do not believe that it is. I do not think
that it is in this way dependent on the underlying details of our sensory and
cognitive architecture, and so I do not believe that it can be the virtue of
moving from awareness of truthmakers of a judgment to the making of that
judgment.

**The Ratificationist Alternative**

Suppose I see a pineapple there and see it as a pineapple. Typically, I will
also be aware of my seeing the pineapple there and of my seeing it as a
pineapple. Moreover, in such cases I will indeed have the immediate
perceptual belief that there is a pineapple there. This is actually the typical
kind of case, whatever sensory and cognitive architecture underlies this
typical case.

Now suppose that some irritating interlocutor asks me “By what right
do you believe that there is a pineapple there?” Relying on my awareness of
my ASEs, and my awareness of myself as enjoying such ASEs, I say “I see the
pineapple there and I see the pineapple as being there”. I have completely answered the irritating interlocutor. I have produced my license to believe that there is a pineapple there. And this is so, whether or not I arrived at the belief by way of attending to the license.

By a “license”, I mean a genuine license, in the sense of one which entails the truth of the immediate beliefs in question, not a merely apparent license, which happens to be indistinguishable from such a genuine license.

The irritating interlocutor is just a device. Whether or not he is around, I am in a position to “ratify” my immediate perceptual beliefs in this way. I am veridically aware of myself as enjoying various ASEs and as having various immediate perceptual beliefs. These ASEs provide me with a license for those immediate perceptual beliefs, and I can ratify these beliefs by bringing that license to mind.

Here then is the neglected epistemic virtue that sensory awareness confers on immediate perceptual belief; reflection on my ASEs allows me to ratify my immediate perceptual beliefs; that is, produce a genuine license for them, a license that could not be produced by a latter day zombie, a recently envatted brain or a perfect blind-sighter. For although they are set up to share immediate beliefs with me, they lack the same range of ASEs as I enjoy; none of them sees anything, for example.

Thanks to this neglected virtue, we are in, and can see ourselves as being in, an epistemically reassuring situation, one not available to the zombie, the envatted brain or the blind-sighter.
The Virtue Appears in Other Contexts

A genuine proof of something you believe can be a good thing to have, even if you did not come to believe that thing on the basis of the proof. Even an atheist who believes that no one has come to believe that God exists on the basis of a genuine proof, can accept that many people who already believe that God exists have what is by their own lights good reason to put effort into finding a genuine proof of this claim. Many mathematicians will strongly believe that a theorem is true before they find a proof of it; indeed believing that a theorem is true can be an essential part of the motive for looking so hard for a proof.

There are many kinds of proofs, but one division of proofs that is relevant here is between proofs which are “monstrations” and proofs which are not. Let me explain.

In the face of Stoic denials of the possibility of motion, Diogenes is supposed to have shown that motion is possible by getting up and walking away. We are told that this is the origin of the Latin tag solvitur ambulando --- “I establish it by walking” --- which has come to have the more general meaning of establishing the truth of a proposition by disclosing its truthmaker, thereby showing the proposition to be true. In the same way, I can show that a table’s corner angles can be trisected by ruler and compass by actually trisecting them, and I can show that I have ring on my finger by holding out my left hand “for all to see”. Whatever else you might say about such performances (and whether or not they beg the question against a skeptic about visual perception), these proofs solvitur abmulando are very good and obvious proofs, and they nicely comport with the etymology of
“demonstation”, from *monstrare*: to lay before the eyes.

At the other end of the spectrum we have Andrew Wiles’ brilliant and highly complex proof of Fermat’s Last Theorem. Wiles’ proof is definitely not the construction and display of a surveyable truthmaker for the claim that no three positive integers $a$, $b$, and $c$ can satisfy the equation $a^n + b^n = c^n$ for any integer value of $n$ greater than two. By now we can be sure that the proof is sound, and of course the proof exhibits novel techniques that are exploitable elsewhere in mathematics; however many had hoped for a rediscovery of Fermat’s claimed proof, which he implied was very direct, and maybe even a *monstration*, by writing in the margin of a copy of Diophantus’ *Arithmetica* that he had found a proof of the theorem that was too large to fit in the margin. That, of course, would have been a massive understatement if the proof was of anything like the same length as Wiles’ proof.

Obviously, there was a little more to Diogenes’ proof than his “monstration”; his disclosure of a truthmaker for the claim that motion is actual. He obviously relied on an intermediate premise connecting the actual and the possible. To be tediously explicit about it, his argument could be reconstructed as follows

If motion is actual then it is possible
Motion is actual.
Therefore, motion is possible

The *monstration*, the disclosure of the truthmaker for all to see, applied only to Diogenes’ second premise. The first premise is a truth of reason; its possible monstrations --- the possible disclosures of its truthmaker --- are obscure, to
put it mildly. But there is another monstration, another disclosure of a truthmaker going on, when we appreciate Diogenes' argument as a whole. Anyone who knows elementary logic sees the validity of the argument and takes the argument to be valid. Some of us may have to lucubrate, to grind away and first recognize the form of the argument as modus ponens, and then remind ourselves that this is in fact a valid form. However, most of us, thanks to our training, simply recognize the validity of the argument. The slightly pathetic line of thought: “This is modus ponens and, as I remember, modus ponens is a valid form” does not come into it. Still, a person who reasons this way is also relying on a monstration, distinct from Diogenes' monstration of the second premise by getting up and walking away, and distinct from that appreciated by those who straight out recognize the validity of the argument. That person at least recognizes a case of modus ponens when he sees one, and in doing so in this case, he recognizes a truthmaker for what he also immediately judges; namely “This is a case of modus ponens”, which is what gets the wheels of his memory turning over.

Considerations like these, properly filled out, might naturally lead to the conclusion that there is no formal demonstration without monstration, no establishing of anything by formal inference without the display and subsequent recognition of truthmakers of premises, and for claims of inferential form, and for claims of validity of the inferential steps.

Indeed, we can naturally understand the demand for the formalization of informal inferences as in part the demand to rewrite the inference so as to offer monstrations of the implicit claims of the validity of the steps made by the one who offered the informal inference. For example, we might translate the inference into system of natural deduction so that those trained in
recognizing simple valid steps can confirm that only such steps are employed (if they are).

God, I like to suppose, never has to rely on demonstration. If he can be thought to have beliefs at all, those beliefs all come with their own monstrations. He is never contemplating p without being aware of its truthmaker or of the truthmaker of its negation. We are all duffers, all blind over vast domains, compared to him. When it comes to a comparison of epistemic virtue along this dimension, the epistemic counterpart of Lutheranism seems the correct position: we are (comparatively speaking) epistemic lowlife, who have to depend on reliability and justification instead.

It is only in cases like perception, immediate reflection on our own mental acts, and our thoughts about a little bit of mathematics that we can approximate to the divine mind by enjoying monstrations of what we believe to be the case.

G.E. Moore, in his famous proof of the external world, was in effect intending to offer a monstration; that is, he was intending to give a proof *solvitur ambulando* by producing a surveyable truthmaker for the claim he had hands (viz. the two hands of his), so that he could then infer that the external world was not wholly mental in character. Moore himself insisted that his argument was not intended as an anti-skeptical argument, noting that if this were his intent he would have aimed to establish first that he was not dreaming that there was a hand in front of him. Moore was not trying to show *that*, still less *how*, we know that there are objects “to be met with in space”; he was trying to show that there are objects to be met with in space, and his argument was structurally similar to Diogenes’ argument.
If there are hands then there are objects to be met with in space.
Here are two hands (with an accompanying monstratio)
Therefore, there are objects to be met with in space

Moore’s target was a certain sort of (misconceived) idealism supposedly at
odds with the existence of hands and other objects to be met with in space. 30
Given this actual target and his proof *solvitur ambulando*, Moore was perfectly
correct to say “we all of us do constantly take proofs of this sort as absolutely
conclusive proofs of certain conclusions --- as finally settling certain questions,
as to which we were previously in doubt”31 32

**How Does the Virtue Relate to Knowledge, Certainty, Justification and
Reliable Formation?**

If there were irritating interlocutors in ordinary life who asked
questions like “By what right do you believe that there is pineapple before
you?” then I actually think that people would answer with things like “Because
I see the pineapple there”. Here the ordinary person would be explicitly
ratifying his immediate perceptual belief by appeal to the corresponding ASE.
(Notice these necessary conditions on the self-report of the ASE: you can only


and Unwin, Ltd, 1959) p 147.

32 Moore would not have called his monstration itself a “proof”; for he denies he has a
“proof” for the claim that he has hands, although he believes he has conclusive grounds for
it.
in this way self-report your seeing a pineapple if you see the pineapple as a pineapple, and appear to yourself in immediate reflection as seeing a pineapple.)

The neglected epistemic virtue, which has been close to being under our noses all along, has not been evident for two reasons; the one arising from a fortunate circumstance and the other from an unfortunate circumstance. We seldom have these sort of irritating interlocutors in ordinary life (people know the answers already), and we have had a bad picture of sensory awareness in philosophy.

Notice that the virtue in question is not the virtue of conferring the status of knowledge on immediate perceptual belief. Seeing (and sensing in general) can be lucky, it need not be counterfactually robust, nor need the accompanying immediate beliefs be “safe”. Suppose I am in fake barn country and I happen to see a real barn in front of me. I believe that there is a real barn there. And suppose I am aware of myself as seeing a real barn there. Then I can produce a genuine license for my belief. But if knowledge requires that my belief be “safe” then I do not know that there is a real barn there.

Nor is the virtue in question the virtue of conferring certainty on one’s immediate perceptual belief. I can be more certain (on inductive grounds, or better on the strength of a very well confirmed physical theory) that the sun will rise tomorrow than I am that an old friend from school has just walked into the room. (Is it really him? The fallibility of one’s recognitional abilities means that one can only properly have a fallible sense of possessing the license in question.) Nevertheless sensory awareness can provide me with a license for believing the second proposition but not the first.

Then there is a question about whether (actual or potential)
“justification” is a helpful name for the virtue. Recall the straight pool case; you could be more epistemically defensive in the straight pool case, more sure of avoiding epistemic blame, by concluding that there are more than three balls on the table. Some would say that this belief is even more justified than the belief that there are more than nine balls on the table. Certainly, relative to your experience, you have insulated yourself even further from epistemic blame; but you seem to me no better off along the dimension of virtue that I have in mind.

In any case, given how “justification” is used in epistemology I would rather err on the side of caution. I don’t want to call the epistemic virtue of being able to ratify your immediate perceptual beliefs by way of citing appropriate ASEs directed at the truthmakers of your beliefs a kind of “justification”. For that terminology may invite a confusion of two kinds of cases; as it were, the epistemic analogs of the second and third kinds of fisherpersons, the one who can actually go home and then produce a genuine license and the one who can’t, but who is entirely blameless in not being able to do so.

There is a “minimal pair” of cases that brings out this difference in extremis. (I am not offering this pair of cases as an intuition pump in favor of the present account, but only as a dramatic illustration of how the present account adjudicates cases along at least two quite different dimensions.)

There is some evidence that in dim or dark lighting conditions you more accurately see the colors associated with very familiar objects. The obvious hypothesis is that sensory memory somehow “fills in” the familiar colors of familiar objects. Supposing for the moment that this is so, there then can be cases of “veridical illusion”: in the near dark you can be looking at the familiar
red surface of your convertible and see the surface of the convertible, but not the redness of the surface; still, memory fills in, and you see the surface as red. The illusory element lies in the fact that the redness that you are seeing is not the redness of the surface of your car, even though your experience encourages you to think this.

Consider two cases in which your spouse tells you he has had your convertible repainted chartreuse. (He hasn’t; he is having you on.) In the first case, you run into the dark garage, and your memory fills in. You don’t see the redness of the surface of your car because it is too dark, but you do see the surface of your car as red. In this case, you are not in a position to ratify your immediate perceptual belief that the surface of your car is now red; you are not aware of your seeing the redness of the car’s surface, because you haven’t seen the redness of the car’s surface. You do not possess a genuine license for your immediate perceptual belief; you are like the third sort of fisherperson.

In the second case, the garage is well-lit. You run in and see the redness of the car’s surface and you see it as red. You are aware of seeing the redness of the car’s surface, and you are aware of yourself as seeing the redness of the car’s surface. This is the typical case. Here you possess the genuine license for your immediate belief that your car is now red.

Now I think you can appreciate the reluctance to call the relevant conferred virtue a form of “justification”. Many would say that you are completely justified in the first case. At the very least, one would have to slice justification a lot more finely than is usual in order to distinguish these two cases in terms of justification.

Notice also that it is coherent to suppose that memory’s filling in, while not actually a way of seeing the colored tropes things exhibit, is still a very
reliable back up in producing beliefs about the colors now had by very familiar objects. (At least this is so on the natural assumption that very familiar objects don’t often change their colors.) So one’s beliefs in the two cases could be on a par when it comes to the virtue of being reliably formed. Yet the neglected virtue is present in the second case and not the first.

The presentation of the minimal pair may lead someone to say: “Well, the neglected virtue then seems pretty trivial, since in the first case you are about as well off as you can be epistemically, even without the so-called neglected virtue.” But this would be bad methodology; from the fact that we can describe a pair of cases in which the virtue makes not much difference, it does not follow that in general the virtue does not make a big difference.

Consider, for example, Laurence BonJour’s well-known case of the unwitting clairvoyant. Suppose he comes to believe on the basis of his clairvoyant power, though subjectively “out of the blue”, that a body is buried on top of Mark Twain’s coffin. Bonjour plausibly held that the belief is nonetheless unjustified, despite its good reliabilist credentials; that is, despite it being produced by a reliable process (to which the clairvoyant does not know that he has access).

I would add that the unwitting clairvoyant does not possess an accessible license for his beliefs. He is not aware of a truthmaker for his belief, as he would be if he genuinely “saw” the body resting underground on Mark Twain’s coffin. He is thus not aware of himself “seeing” the body resting underground on Mark Twain’s coffin. Moreover, he is not aware of himself as “seeing” the body resting underground on Mark Twain’s coffin. However, if we

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imagine him to have these three attitudes; that is, if we suppose that he has these sources of ratification for his reliably formed belief, then it seems that the clairvoyant knows that a body is buried on top of Mark Twain’s coffin. Some might say that he still needs to acquire a certain rational confidence in his method in order to be credited with knowledge. Perhaps, perhaps not; but at the very least, he is now in a position to ratify his belief that a body is buried on top of Mark Twain’s coffin by appeal to quasi-sensory awareness of its truthmaker.

**How Zombies and Envatted Brains Are Worse Off Epistemically**

Now we can say just what epistemologically relevant thing latter day zombies and recently envatted brains lack. They are unable to ratify their immediate perceptual beliefs by way of citing appropriate ASEs directed at the truthmakers of those beliefs.

The relevant contrast between us and the latter day zombies is not that the zombies lack qualia, for we do too. Rather, they no longer have ASEs; qualified objects in the environment no longer present to them in this or that sensory way; the quality tropes found in objects no longer present to them; structures of quality no longer present to them, so they cannot even rise to the level of hallucination; and the qualitative manners of presentation which figure essentially in ASEs are now beyond their ken.

The recently envatted brains have a very restricted range of ASEs. Perhaps they can be presented with mere structures of quality, structures that are not exemplified in any of their external sensory fields. If those envatted brains happen to be neuro-functionally identical with normally embodied
brains, e.g. our brains, then the structures of quality they enjoy will strike the subjects in question as items in a complex external world that is appearing to them. But no items in a complex external world will be appearing to them. That is, the sensory lives of these subjects, who are now wholly constituted by envatted brains, will be thoroughly hallucinatory.

Suppose we have a latter day zombie who is neuro-functionally identical with a normal sensate person. (I myself doubt that this is possible, but suppose it anyway.) That zombie might utter things like “I have noticed that typically when I standardly form a novel immediate perceptual belief to the effect that a is F, I am also enjoying an ASE whose object is the F-ness of a. I find this epistemically very reassuring. My immediate perceptual beliefs are formed alongside sensory awareness of their truthmakers. So they are characteristically true. This tells me that my apparently coherent system of belief does not float free of reality”. What the zombie has said, if he has said anything, is false. He does not still have ASEs; he simply has the unshakable conviction that he still has ASEs.

Suppose there is a subject wholly constituted by a recently envatted brain, and this recently envatted brain is neuro-functionally identical with some normally embodied brain. The subject might say things like “I have noticed that typically when I standardly form a novel immediate perceptual belief to the effect that a is F, I am also enjoying an ASE whose object is the F-ness of a. I find this epistemically very reassuring. My immediate perceptual beliefs are formed alongside sensory awareness of their truthmakers. So they are characteristically true. This tells me that my apparently coherent system of belief does not float free of reality”. What this subject, who is wholly constituted by an envatted brain, has said is false. Ever since his brain was
envatted, he has not had ASEs directed upon items in a complex external world. His recent immediate perceptual beliefs about the external world have not been formed alongside ASEs directed at truthmakers of these beliefs. He is no longer having such ASEs; he is now continuously hallucinating and merely has the unshakable conviction that he is having such ASEs.

Suppose, however, we go to a third case, the one originally urged on us by Hilary Putnam and Davidson himself. The brain is not recently envatted; it grows in the vat, in a way reminiscent of the way a brain grows in an infant’s head. A huge vat computer has separate streams of information stimulate the proximate sensory nerves in the brain.

It seems to me an a posteriori question, and one that is very hard to settle, whether, by pushing things in this direction, we can confer a genuine system of prosthetic sensing on the vat-grown brain, a system of prosthetic sensing directed not at external reality but at complicated fluctuations in the vat computer. Since I don’t believe that sensory intentionality or aboutness can be reduced to some happy mix of causation and descriptive satisfaction, I take it that there is a real distinction between such fluctuations systematically causing narrowly supervening ASEs and such fluctuations being the genuine objects of external sensory ASEs. But let us follow Putnam and Davidson and stipulate the latter.

So one day, the subject wholly constituted by a vat-grown brain and its prosthetic senses directed at fluctuations in the vat computer, says “I have noticed that typically when I standardly form a novel immediate perceptual belief, say to the effect that a pineapple is red, I am also enjoying an ASE whose object is a truthmaker for the belief, in this case the redness of the pineapple. I find this epistemically very reassuring. The more of this that happens, the
more I come to see that my immediate perceptual beliefs are formed alongside sensory awareness of their truthmakers. So they are characteristically true. This tells me that my apparently coherent system of belief does not float free of reality”. On the supposition we have made, what the subject says could be true. But what he says is not what we would say if we uttered sentences of just these forms. At the very least, he means something different by “pineapple”; for by hypothesis he has never had an ASE directed at a pineapple. Still, he may be giving a good argument, whatever exactly he is saying.

**Responding to the Irritating Interlocutor (But not the Skeptic)**

You will ask me: How can you tell you are not a latter day zombie, a recently envatted brain or a vat grown brain? When I am at an epistemology conference, I reject the question because it automatically puts me in the famously unpromising argumentative position of trying to “answer the skeptic”. In this rhetorical context, at an epistemology conference, a way of telling is the discovery of a distinctive sign of not being in the situation of a latter day zombie, a recently envatted brain or a vat grown brain; combined with the presentation of that sign in a way that does not beg the question against the hypothesis that I am one of these situations.

Well, I can *insist* that I have the distinctive sign; I do have ASEs directed at items in the external world. But these other characters will at least seem to insist on similar things with the same conviction, even though they are not enjoying ASEs directed at items in the external world. My insistence does not meet the relevant standards for being a “way of telling” that I am not in their kind of situation or some other situation that is equally epistemically
impoverished, such as that of a sleeper who has been coherently dreaming for years. The reason is that there are skeptical alternative hypotheses, viz. that I am dreaming, that I am wholly constituted by an envatted brain, etc., which would explain the experiential common factors or mere seemings equally well; and these are hypotheses which I cannot rule out without assuming that my seemings are veridical.

This is a familiar point; a certain sort of skeptical challenge sets the standards for a response in such a way that we not left with an adequate ground to mount a response. To ratify our immediate perceptual beliefs in the straightforward way by appealing to the associated ASEs is either question-begging in assuming we have more than mere seemings to begin with, or it is dialectically ineffective in that it would not persuade someone who was convinced that we did not have anything more than mere seemings to begin with.\(^{34} \)\(^{35} \)

However, there is an ordinary sense in which I do have a way of telling that I am not in the situation of a latter day zombie, a subject who wholly consists of a recently envatted brain, a subject who wholly consists of a vat-grown brain, or indeed a sleeper who has been coherently dreaming for years.

\(^{34}\) The latter day zombie does not have things phenomenally appear to him, in that sense he enjoys no seemings, but he is stipulated to have the unshakable conviction that things are appearing to him. In that sense, it seems to him that there is a pineapple before him.

By hypothesis, none of these three characters --- the latter day zombie, the recently envatted brain, the vat-grown brain or the sleeper --- can see the lectern here. Recall that my ASEs are not subject to the Phenomenal Bottleneck Principle; from the fact that I may not be able to distinguish a case of my seeing the lectern from certain exquisitely similar cases of my hallucinating a lectern it does not follow that I am now only enjoying an ASE directed at the common qualitative character of these two different events. Even though I may not be able to distinguish these two events, I can nonetheless see lecterns, and not merely some lectern-intimating structure of qualities.

When I see a lectern, I am sometimes aware of my seeing a lectern, just like that and without any further investigation of reality. (Only sometimes though; I’ve been teaching so long I am quite jaded about lecterns, I have come to take seeing lecterns for granted. In fact, I seldom attend to events of my seeing a lectern.) If an irritating interlocutor asks me “With what right do you believe that you see a lectern?” I can answer by relying on higher-order, attentive reflective episodes, viz. my awareness of my seeing the lectern and my awareness of myself as seeing the lectern. I can notice that the object of the first attentive episode is an event, namely my seeing the lectern, which is a truthmaker for the belief under challenge; namely the belief that I am seeing the lectern. I say to my irritating interlocutor “I do find it epistemically reassuring that my belief that I am seeing the lectern was formed alongside an attentive reflective episode directed at an event that is the truthmaker for that belief.”

Of course, my irritating interlocutor will likely continue “With what right do you believe that you are aware of your seeing a lectern?” You can anticipate what my reply will be. I will now turn to the next higher-order
attentive reflective episode, e.g. my awareness of my awareness of my seeing the lectern. At each level, I can in principle produce a legitimate answer to the challenge mounted at that level. My problem here is not that I don’t have sound replies all the way up, my problem is medical; it lies in the headache that I will get by performing still higher acts of awareness of...acts of awareness of the ASE which is my seeing the lectern.

I do then, it seems to me, have a perfectly good way of telling that I am seeing the lectern, and given that, I can point to a distinctive sign that I am not in one of the three predicaments described above. For in none of those situations can anyone actually see a lectern.

I know that many people will be unimpressed with this reasoning. They will think that this part of epistemology cannot be that easy. When I ask people what is wrong with the reasoning some say it begs the question against the skeptic, but I was intending to beg the question against the skeptic, or better to reject the skeptic’s argumentative game. My irritating interlocutor is not a skeptic, he simply wants to ask a long list of questions about the rights I have to beliefs of certain sorts. And it seems to me I can give helpful answers to each one of these questions, along the lines indicated.

When I ask people what is wrong with this reasoning, others point to the fact that the third sort of character, the subject wholly constituted by the vat-grown brain and its prosthetic senses directed at different kinds of fluctuations in the vat computer, can produce structurally similar reasoning, all the way up. But there is no harm in that. The structurally similar reasoning does not produce the conclusion that he can see a lectern, or that he is aware of seeing a lectern, in a situation in which it is manifestly false that he can see a lectern or be aware of seeing a lectern. That would be a problem, but that
problem does not arise. What follows from his structurally similar reasoning is the conclusion he would express by “I see a lectern” and that it not the false proposition that he sees a lectern.

The final sort of resistance I have encountered is this. The vat-grown brain is in a bad epistemic situation; the fact that he can engage in structurally similar reasoning means that something about our epistemic situation has been left out. In one sense, given our stipulation that it is fluctuations in the vat computer which are appearing to him, the right thing to say is that the vat-grown brain is in bad situation; he has a small reality to operate within, the fluctuations in the vat computer are all that he is engaging with on a day to day basis. Nonetheless, he can answer his version of the irritating interlocutor perfectly well.

Given that I can answer the irritating interlocutor what then is the remaining interest in the fact that I cannot “answer” the skeptic? I am not sure. Certainly part of the remaining interest of “answering the skeptic” is parasitic upon supposing that only the mere seemings, as opposed to the full range of ASEs, are our real epistemic starting points. (The skeptic’s alternative hypotheses do not explain the full range of our ASEs. Indeed those hypotheses, viz. that we are dreaming, that we are recently envatted brains, etc., are simply at odds with the full range of our ASEs.) Once we recognize that our epistemically starting points include the full range of the ASEs, and not just the mere seemings, once we escape the bamboozlement of Galileo, Descartes and Hume, we are in a better position to see just what “answering the skeptic” would take.

When we are asked to answer the skeptic, we are being asked to show that we are not in the position of epistemically very impoverished subjects,
and to show this without appealing to any of the epistemic advantages we have over them.\textsuperscript{36}

There are many things one could say about this; but the first is that the game is fixed from the start.

\textsuperscript{36} Of course, putting it that way begs a certain sort of question, but mustn’t it be begged?