

Perception, Rationality and Self-Knowledge (Gianfranco Soldati, Johannes Roessler, Andrea Giananti)

Summary of the Application

Perceptual experience of an object is often said to settle questions as to what the object is like in a peculiarly immediate and authoritative way. Articulations of this idea can be found across otherwise disparate traditions in 20th century philosophy. According to Husserl, ‘the ultimate legitimating source of all rational assertions’ is provided by ‘self-giving intuitions’ in which the presence to consciousness of an object renders facts regarding the object ‘self-evident’. (quoted in Smith 2003: 47) Again, Austin writes that when I see a pig, ‘there is no longer any question of collecting evidence [as to the presence of a pig]; its coming into view doesn’t provide me with more *evidence* that it’s a pig, I can now just *see* that it is, the question is settled.’ (1962: 115)

The question of how the intuitive contrast between ‘evidence-based’ and ‘experience-based’ knowledge is to be articulated is an issue of fundamental importance for epistemology and the philosophy of mind. A general thesis informing the proposed project is that properly understanding the contrast requires understanding the nature of the self-knowledge available to reflective perceivers. Note that Austin’s confidence that his question is settled (in a way that obviates the need for evidence) finds expression in a claim to self-knowledge: ‘I can see that it is a pig.’ A natural thought here is that it can hardly be a coincidence that Austin is *aware* of the way his question is settled. That thought in turn raises immediate questions regarding the content and the nature of the reflective awareness we ordinarily have of what we currently perceive, and regarding the relationship between such awareness and the explanation of ‘first-order’ perceptual knowledge. By putting these questions centre stage, the project aims to broaden the terms of current work on the epistemic role of perceptual experience. There is a strong tendency, in contemporary epistemology, to treat ‘perceptual knowledge’ and ‘self-knowledge’ as labels for different and largely unconnected sets of philosophical problems. The two topics are supposedly distinguished not just by the subject matter of the knowledge under consideration (knowledge of ‘the world around us’ vs knowledge of ‘our own current mental states’) but also by the distinctive philosophical questions to which the two kinds of knowledge give rise (roughly: how to understand ‘perceptual warrant’ vs how to understand ‘first-person authority’). Both through the work of its core members and through international conferences and at least one edited collection, the project will seek to promote a less compartmentalized approach, highlighting substantive, mutually illuminating connections between the two areas.

The project aims to make progress on these matters through a sustained critical dialogue between three competing approaches, to be developed by the three subprojects. This dialectical structure may be unusual, but we are confident that it will prove extremely fruitful. The relation between the three approaches is characterized by substantial common ground combined with a number of specific disagreements. The close mutual questioning afforded by the project will not only provide invaluable support for each subproject but simultaneously help to understand the sources of some major controversies in contemporary epistemology. Very briefly, the three approaches are as follows:

Subproject A (Roessler) investigates the prospects for what it calls a non-reductive analysis of the explanatory connection between perceptual experience and knowledge, an analysis that takes the connection to be basic rather than analyzable in terms of some underlying link between perceptual experience and belief.

Subproject B (Soldati) pursues a ‘disjunctivist’ account of perceptual warrant, according to which perceptual knowledge is to be explained in terms of reasons for belief that are provided by veridical perceptual experience (not by illusions or hallucinations).

Subproject C (Giananti, with the supervision of Roessler and Soldati) explores an account of perceptual knowledge that is closely informed by work in the phenomenological tradition. A central idea is that awareness constitutively involves a basic form of self-awareness, and that it is in terms of this constitutive link that we should account for the sense in which perceptual knowledge is intelligible to reflective perceivers.

Subproject A (Johannes Roessler)

The Manifest and the Philosophical Image of Perceptual Knowledge

1. Summary of the Research Plan

The overarching aim of subproject A is to make a case for, and explore the consequences of, the thesis that everyday ‘commonsense psychological’ explanations of knowledge in terms of perception are more simple-minded than is (almost invariably) assumed in contemporary epistemology: we ordinarily take the explanatory connection between perceptual experience and knowledge to be direct and primitive, not intelligible in terms of an account of the way perceptual experience warrants belief. The subproject also aims to develop a complementary account of reflective perceivers’ self-knowledge, and the role their self-knowledge plays in explaining the rationality of perceptual beliefs; and to reach a better understanding of the relationship between two perspectives on the explanatory connection between perception and knowledge: everyday explanatory practice vs epistemology. Pursuing these issues will promote a substantially new perspective on a range of traditional issues in the epistemology of perception, such as the relation between knowledge, self-knowledge and rationality, the epistemic role of conscious experience, and the scope of perceptual knowledge.

2. Research Plan

2.1 Current State of Research

Contemporary work on the epistemology of perception has traditionally focused on the question of how perceptually grounded beliefs about mind-independent objects are warranted; more specifically, how such beliefs can be warranted, in part, *in virtue of* their perceptual origin. Debates over the nature of ‘perceptual warrant’ have been characterized by persistent disagreements on a number of specific issues, but also by widespread consensus regarding the aims and the status of a theory of perceptual warrant itself.

One issue that has proved particularly recalcitrant is whether perception confers warrant on our beliefs by providing us with a certain kind of justifying reason, normally open to reflection, or whether perception warrants beliefs in a non-rational way that is inaccessible to the subject’s reflective understanding. (See Burge 2003, BonJour and Sosa 2003, McDowell 2011) Another controversial issue has been whether perception provides for ‘immediate’, non-inferential justification, or whether perceptual beliefs about our environment can be warranted only in virtue of the subject’s grasp of supporting evidence. (Pryor 2005, Williams 2005) Again, there is disagreement over whether perceptual warrant is a *factive* notion in the sense that only true beliefs can be warranted in the relevant sense (McDowell 2011). However, those working within the framework of a theory of perceptual warrant share a number of substantive commitments, deriving from the following widely accepted principle:

PW: If S knows that some object b is F on the basis of perceiving b, then S’s possession of knowledge that b is F must be open to the following type of explanation: (a) S believes that b is F as a result of her current perception, (b) in the light of that, her belief can be seen to be warranted and (c) as a consequence, to amount to knowledge.

PW implies that the notion of perceptual warrant holds the key to understanding *how* perception yields knowledge. Furthermore, the notion will also play a pivotal role in specific debates over the *scope* of perceptual knowledge. Can perception yield knowledge of mind-independent objects? Of other minds, or causal relations, or natural kinds, or the evaluative features of objects? PW suggests that debates about all these issues turn on the fundamental question of whether perception intelligibly confers warrant on the relevant kinds of beliefs. An interesting background issue in all these debates is this: how, if at all, is *conscious perceptual experience* relevant to the acquisition of perceptual

knowledge of mind-independent objects, other minds, and so on? If PW is correct, the answer to that question depends on whether perceptual consciousness matters for the kind of warrant in virtue of which perceptual beliefs ordinarily amount to knowledge (for opposing views see, McDowell 2002, Burge 2003). Finally, the theory of perceptual warrant is thought to have an immediate bearing on a central issue in the philosophy of mind, viz. the nature of perceptual experience. For example, it is common to appeal to the putative ‘rationalizing role’ of perceptual experience in support of a representationalist account of experience (e.g. Ginsborg 2011), but also to rebut that argument by insisting that perceptual experience conceived as a relation to perceived objects can nevertheless intelligibly provide us with justifying reasons for belief (e.g. Brewer 2011).

PW, then, controls some key debates in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. What is the case for PW itself? It is often assumed that rejecting PW would commit one to a ‘coherentist’ view of the warrant in virtue of which perceptual beliefs amount to knowledge (see e.g. Brueckner 2008), with its familiar weaknesses. That assumption is itself questionable, though. A number of authors have recently argued for versions of a position that (unlike coherentism) acknowledges an explanatory connection between perception and knowledge, but takes the connection to be primitive in the sense that it is not to be analyzed in terms of a more fundamental, warrant-conferring link between perception and *belief*. (For ease of reference, we call this a ‘non-reductive’ account of the explanatory link between perception and knowledge.) According to Barry Stroud, perceptually grounded knowledge that *p* is not to be rendered intelligible in terms of some experience on the basis of which one justifiably comes to believe that *p*. Rather, it is to be understood in terms of one’s capacity for propositional perception: one’s perceiving that *p*. (2009, 2011, 2015) According to Tim Williamson, appeal to propositional perception in answering the question ‘How do you know?’ should be construed not as reporting ‘an experience somehow prior to knowledge, but simply a particular kind of knowledge: visual knowledge.’ (2009: 348) According to Alan Millar, an explanation of how you know that there are tomatoes in the basket, in terms of your seeing that there are tomatoes in the basket, is more basic than an explanation of why you believe that there are tomatoes in the basket: your reason for believing this is provided precisely by the fact that you can see (hence know) that there are tomatoes in the basket. (2010, 2011).

A general aim of the proposed subproject is to provide a framework for understanding and adjudicating the disagreement between advocates of PW and proponents of some kind of non-reductive account. More specifically, the project aims to articulate and defend a version of the non-reductive view and to explore its bearing on reflective perceiver’s self-knowledge and the rationality of perceptual beliefs.

2.2 Current State of my own Research

Three central topics of my recent work have been the epistemic role of perceptual experience and perceptual attention (2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), the nature and development of reason-giving explanation (Perner & Roessler 2010, Roessler 2013a, Roessler & Perner 2012, Priewasser, Roessler & Perner 2013, Roessler 2014, Roessler & Perner 2015), and the nature of self-knowledge (2013b, 2013c, 2013d 2015a, 2015b). Clearly the papers on the first topic are most immediately relevant to this subproject, which aims to develop in more detail suggestions they explore in a preliminary fashion. But the subproject’s concerns are also closely connected with issues regarding self-knowledge and reason-giving explanation, and work on the project will draw on my recent work in these areas.

2.3 Detailed Research Plan

The subproject falls into three parts. Part I will present a non-reductive analysis of the ‘manifest image’ of perceptual knowledge (i.e. the way we ordinarily, pre-theoretically take perceptual experience to make possession of knowledge intelligible), and defend that analysis against two competitors. Part II extends the case for the analysis by presenting a complementary account of the rationality of perceptual beliefs. Part III investigates the apparent conflict between the

manifest image (as articulated by the non-reductive analysis) and the traditional ‘philosophical image’ of perceptual knowledge, encapsulated in PW.

Part I: The manifest image of perceptual knowledge

Some understanding of the explanatory connection between perception and knowledge appears to be part of ordinary ‘commonsense psychology’ or a ‘theory of mind’. Recent work in development psychology suggests that typically developing children acquire the basic elements of that understanding over the course of the pre-school years. (For reviews see Robinson 2011, Roessler 2013a) For example while 3-year-olds apparently assume that seeing a tiny fragment of a drawing of a giraffe is sufficient to know that the drawing represents a giraffe, 5-year-olds realize that (in the words of one psychologist) ‘the person simply does not see enough of it to be able to identify it as a giraffe.’ (Flavell 2004, p. 28)

The dispute between proponents of PW and advocates of a non-reductive account is best seen, in the first instance, as a disagreement over the correct analysis of ordinary explanatory practice. The issue may be put in terms of the relation between two questions: (1) How does S know that b is F? and (2) Why does S believe that b is F? According to PW, the answer to (1) turns on the answer to (2), and many philosophers committed to PW take this dependence to be to the fore in ordinary explanatory practice. For example, according to McDowell, if a rational subject knows something on the basis of perception ‘(s)he can invoke her perceptual state in order to say how she is warranted in a belief that counts as knowledgeable by virtue of being warranted in that way.’ (2011, p. 23) In contrast, defenders of a non-reductive account hold that appeal to S’s perception may directly answer (1), without any independent consideration of (2).

Resolving this debate arguably requires a better understanding of the role the commonsense psychology of perceptual knowledge plays in everyday social interaction. On some ‘internalist’ views, the key skill is that of defending one’s perceptual beliefs by offering reason-giving explanations for them in terms of one’s current perception. (McDowell 1992, 2011) On some ‘externalist’ views, our ordinary understanding of perceptual knowledge is manifested primarily in the context of assessing the epistemic credentials of a belief from a third-person perspective. (Goldman 1993) The project will argue that neither of these views gets right the distinctive role (1) — more precisely, the second-person question ‘How do you know?’ — plays in interactions aimed at sharing knowledge, such as testimony and joint attention. Reflection on that question suggests that explanations of knowledge in terms of perception are expected to *vindicate* a claim to knowledge, i.e., crudely put, to invoke explanantia that would provide a reason to think that the attitude they explain is indeed *knowledge*. (Compare Austin’s remark that the question ‘How do you know?’ can be asked as a ‘pointed question’ (1961: 78), bringing into play the possibility that you may not actually know what you claim to know but may merely believe it.) The project aims to offer a more careful and detailed articulation of this point, and then to put it to work as a constraint on (a) how to formulate a non-reductive account of the explanatory link between perception and knowledge, and (b) how to defend that account against both internalist and externalist analyses of the ‘manifest image’ of perceptual knowledge.

Re (a): On one version of the non-reductive account, explanations of knowledge in terms of perception offer characterizations of the explanandum as a *particular way* of knowing (in the sense in which being green is a way of being coloured). (Williamson 2009; for discussion see Cassam 2007). A similar view is that such explanations bottom out in attributions of epistemic perception (‘S can see that b is F’). (Stroud 2009 might be read on these lines.) The project will defend the diagnosis that neither of these views can respect the ‘vindicating’ character of ordinary explanations of perceptual knowledge. Doing so, arguably, requires putting centre stage the notion of perceptual recognition: we take it that appeal to the experiential presence of b to S accounts for S’s knowledge that b is F insofar as it enables S perceptually to recognize b as being F. A critical issue for this analysis concerns the explanatory value of perceptual-recognition capacities. A natural worry is that such capacities amount to little more than ‘vires dormitivae’. (Millar 2008) There are two levels at which the issue needs to be addressed. In the case of relatively high-level properties and

types, a perceptual-recognitional arguably has a certain internal structure: in identifying a giraffe, for example, it will be manifest to you *how you are able to tell* the animal is a giraffe (say, by its distinctive shape and coat pattern). In the case of more basic properties such as colour or shape, our ability to tell is intelligible, more immediately, in terms of the experiential presence of the object and the relevant kind of feature, together with our background knowledge of what such features looks like under standard conditions.

Re (b): While the idea that perception affords knowledge by providing us with reasons for belief looks like a natural description of ordinary explanatory practice to many philosophers, it has proved surprisingly difficult to pinpoint these putatively familiar reasons. For example, it is possible to extract three quite different views from McDowell's influential writings on this matter: that the reasons in question are the facts that constitute the representational content of veridical perceptual experience (e.g. that *b* is *F*), that they are facts regarding the perceptual appearance of things (that it looks to *S* as if *b* were *F*), and that they are facts regarding propositional perception (that *S* sees that *b* is *F*). (For critical discussion of these oscillations, see Ginsborg 2006, Roessler 2009) By probing and challenging these and other possible options, the project will argue that the seemingly natural internalist analysis in fact misrepresents ordinary explanatory practice.

Another line of investigation concerns a basic challenge facing 'externalist' analyses of the 'manifest image'. The problem, briefly, is that, on such analyses, vindicating explanations of perceptual knowledge cannot be expected to be available to commonsense psychology. Not only is there no particular reason to expect that a subject acquiring perceptual knowledge will be in a position to understand *how* she knows what she knows (and hence to expect her to have a good reason to believe *that* she knows it). Rather, there are positive grounds for thinking that the factors externalists take to determine whether knowledge is what the subject actually has will be remote from her understanding and perhaps even from her conscious awareness. (In developing this challenge, a comparison with Williams's (1985) critique of utilitarian theories of morality is instructive: Goldman's suggestion that 'ordinary epistemic evaluators' have a 'mentally stored list or set of epistemic virtues and vices' (1993: 274), the rationale for which they may not understand, bears a certain resemblance to indirect utilitarianism.)

Part 2: Rationality and Self-Knowledge

A powerful motivation for PW — specifically, internalist versions of PW — derives from the view that, at least in the case of rational thinkers, perceptually grounded knowledge is inextricably entwined with rational belief. Having a good reason to believe that *b* is *F* is not some optional extra condition, but one that is part and parcel of direct perceptual knowledge that *b* is *F*. The aim of this part of the project is to suggest that the non-reductive analysis of ordinary explanatory practice can accommodate and elucidate that point. The idea to be explored is that is we should question the assumption that *S*'s reason for believing that *b* is *F* has to be a reason that would provide a good explanation of how *S* knows that *b* is *F*. Rather, recognizing that *b* is *F* may simultaneously involve the acquisition of 'first-order' knowledge and of reflective awareness and understanding of that knowledge. Such awareness and understanding, in turn, would provide *S* with a conclusive reason for believing that *b* is *F*: viz. *that she can see that b is F*. (See Millar 2010, 2011 and Roessler 2011d for different versions of this idea.)

The central challenge facing this 'top-down' approach to the rationality of perceptual belief concerns the nature of *S*'s self-knowledge and self-understanding. How is it that the exercise of perceptual-recognitional capacities not only delivers first-order knowledge but makes that knowledge manifest and intelligible to the subject? One part of the answer arguably lies in the way perception itself informs us about the enabling conditions of perception. (Evans 1982, Roessler 2009) For example, vision informs us about the lighting conditions, or the relative distance between subject and object, that make it possible to see the object and (differently) to see its shape and colour sufficiently clearly to make it possible to see that it is a giraffe. But the crucial epistemological question is how to understand *S*'s knowledge of such facts as that she can see *b*, or that she can clearly see its colour, or that she can perceptually tell that *b* is *F*. The hypothesis to be pursued is that the 'transparency of experience', which has been much discussed in the context of

debates about the nature of perceptual consciousness, holds the key to a solution. The ‘transparency thesis’ says that it is impossible to attend introspectively to the visual experience of seeing a giraffe other than by visually attending to the giraffe. (See Moore 1903, Martin 2002, Campbell 2014) The project will aim to spell out and examine what is arguably a crucial epistemological implication of this thesis: that in visually attending to the giraffe we *can be* reflectively aware of our visual experience of the giraffe. It will also compare and contrast this approach with Alan Millar’s account of perceptual self-knowledge in terms of ‘second-order perceptual-recognitional capacities (such as the capacity to recognize concerning *b* that it is seen by one to be *F*). (Millar 2011)

Part 3: Epistemology

The final part of this subproject will be concerned with a set of issues regarding the relation between the ‘manifest image’ of perceptual knowledge, as construed by the non-reductive account, and a philosophical understanding of such knowledge. That we are pre-theoretically disposed to make sense of perceptual knowledge in a certain way does not, of course, show that our explanatory schema is adequate and can properly vindicate claims to perceptual knowledge. Nor does it show that PW is wrong. This raises the possibility of a clash between the manifest image of perceptual knowledge and the philosophical view that only the sort of explanation demanded by PW can genuinely vindicate claims to perceptual knowledge.

A two-level approach? The first question here is whether PW may somehow be reconciled with the non-reductive analysis of the manifest image. For example, one might argue that ordinary explanations of perceptual knowledge, even though not themselves couched in terms of perceptual warrant, are underpinned — and thus validated — by some kind of warrant-conferring relation between perception and belief (an appreciation of which may be reserved to philosophy and the cognitive sciences). But suppose this conciliatory, ‘two-level’ approach does not work, perhaps because the explanations we ordinarily take to vindicate claims to perceptual knowledge resist the ‘functionalist’ interpretation that would be demanded by that approach. This would suggest that PW does conflict with the view of perceptual knowledge implicit in ordinary explanatory practice. How we should we resolve this conflict? Should we think of the manifest image as a ‘folk theory’ that (as so often happens with folk theories) has been rendered obsolete? Or should we abandon PW, given its incompatibility with the conception of the epistemic role of perceptual experience we actually hold?

The case for PW. The most immediate question to arise at this point concerns the force of PW itself. One objective of the project will be to understand and assess the (arguably diverse) sources of this thesis. To illustrate: one such source (to the fore in contemporary epistemology) arguably lies in a reductionist view of propositional knowledge itself: if knowledge *just is* a distinctive kind of ‘status’ enjoyed by certain beliefs, it’s hard to see how perception can intelligibly give rise to it other than by producing beliefs in a way that helps to secure that status. A rather longer-established source derives from philosophical scepticism, which has often been taken to show that perception cannot provide for direct knowledge of mind-independent objects. At best, it can yield direct knowledge of our own perceptual experience, which in turn may provide a basis for warranted belief (and inferential knowledge) about mind-independent objects.

Indispensability. Suppose that these and other arguments for PW may reasonably be resisted. Still, the question remains whether the authority of the manifest image is open to any kind of philosophical understanding, and perhaps corroboration. One way to approach that question is to ask what repudiating the kind of explanatory connection we ordinarily see between perception and knowledge would take with it; and whether the resulting position is one we may coherently adopt. Is there a sense in which the manifest image of perceptual knowledge is *indispensable*, perhaps insofar as it is essential for the purpose of making sense of perceptual beliefs? (William’s (1985) discussion of understanding certain ethical practices and Stroud’s (2000) discussion of the necessary conditions for attributions of beliefs about colours provide a model for this line of investigation.) Or might it even be indispensable in the stronger sense of being a general prerequisite of rational thought? (Stroud’s (2011) discussion of the indispensability of thought about necessity, causation and value provides a model for this line of investigation.)

The scope of perceptual knowledge. Consideration of the potentially indispensable role of the manifest image of perceptual knowledge may present a fruitful new perspective on question regarding the scope of perceptual knowledge. On the non-reductive view developed in part 1, whether, say, knowledge of other minds can ever count as a genuinely perceptual knowledge (as distinct from knowledge acquired on the basis of perception plus inference) depends on whether such knowledge is intelligible in terms of a perceptual-recognitional capacity. An initial argument for a ‘wide scope’ view of perceptual knowledge is that when you know, say, that someone is resentful on the basis of the way they look you may not be able to describe the relevant look other than as one expressive of *resentment*, which, it may be argued, involves an exercise of the same capacity as recognizing someone’s resentment by their look. (For relevant recent work on perceptual knowledge of other minds, see Green 2007, Smith 2010, Stout 2012, Avramides 2013) Whether this type of argument can succeed, however, may ultimately depend on more fundamental questions, regarding our grasp of the relevant subject matter, in particular our grasp of concepts of mind-independent objects (Campbell 2014) and our grasp of the existence of other people (Eilan forthcoming). In both cases, notwithstanding profound differences between them, it may be argued that possession of perceptual-recognitional capacities plays an indispensable role in grounding our thought: specifically our ability to think of physical objects as ‘this’ and our ability to think of other people as ‘you’.

2.4 Schedules and Milestones

The work detailed under this subproject is to be carried out in collaboration with a PhD student who will work under my supervision.

Year 1: work on part 1

Year 2: work on part 2

Year 3: work on part 3

2.5 Relevance and Impact

There are two general ways in which the subproject aims to reshape current philosophical thinking about perceptual knowledge. First, as indicated in the ‘Summary of the Application’, it seeks to bring out crucial interconnections between questions regarding the epistemology of perceptual knowledge and questions regarding the nature of reflective perceivers’ self-knowledge and self-understanding. Second, as the subproject’s title suggests, a major goal is to demonstrate the importance (and potential benefits) of getting right the nature of our pre-theoretical understanding of the authority and explanatory role of perception — a topic that is often treated cursorily in contemporary epistemology.

The subproject is expected to result in three kinds of publications. First, a monograph by Dr. Roessler, provisionally entitled *Perception and the Limits of Epistemology*. Second, there will be papers in peer-reviewed journals by the members of the Warwick node of the project. Third, there will be at least one volume, to be edited by the postdoc and PhD students from Warwick and Fribourg, bringing together papers presented at the conferences. One option to be explored is that the volume will be part of the Consciousness and Self-Consciousness Series published by Oxford University Press, which presents work done under the auspices of the Warwick based Consciousness and Self-Consciousness research centre (6 volumes in the series have appeared so far).

Subproject B (Gianfranco Soldati)

Perception: a Reason to Believe

1. Summary of the Research Plan

Someone who enjoys perceptual knowledge is usually aware of how she knows what she knows. How should we understand the content and the epistemological significance of her reflective insight? This subproject explores a traditional hypothesis, in some aspects antithetic to that pursued by subproject A: that perceptual experience confers a distinctive kind of warrant on a subject's *belief* that things are some way – a warrant which is such that someone who has it understands how that enables her to know things. Thus this subproject aims to develop and defend a broadly 'internalist' version of Perceptual Warrant (PW):

PW: If S knows that some object b is F on the basis of perceiving b, then S's possession of knowledge that b is F must be open to the following type of explanation: (a) S believes that b is F as a result of her current perception, (b) in the light of that, her belief can be seen to be warranted and (c) as a consequence, to amount to knowledge.

Despite PW's considerable popularity, the details of the explanation of perceptual knowledge that it is deemed to provide have proved elusive. The general thesis informing this subproject is that *epistemological disjunctivism* (ED) provides the most promising approach to perceptual warrant, but that extant work in the tradition of ED has failed to resolve some foundational issues. These issues fall under four headings: reasons, reflective access, rational deliberation, and the supposed independence of an epistemic reason from the knowledge it is supposed to explain.

2. Research Plan

2.1 Current State of Research

ED goes back to McDowell's seminal paper 'Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge' (1982). It has subsequently been elaborated (and repeatedly modified) by McDowell in a series of papers and books (1994, 1995, 2002, 2006, 2011). ED is increasingly taken seriously in mainstream epistemology (compare, for example, the notable recent exposition and defence by Pritchard 2012). The core idea of ED is that if a subject perceptually knows that p, that is because she is in possession of grounds for her belief that p that are both *factive* and *reflectively accessible* to her. An important attraction of ED is that it promises to avoid familiar problems with two traditional (and still very influential) accounts of knowledge: *classical internalism* and *classical externalism*.

Classical internalism (Audi 1998, Bonjour 1985, Chisholm 1977, Conee and Feldman 2004) says that the warrant that turns a true belief into knowledge must be reflectively accessible to a subject. Traditionally, reflectively accessible items are taken to be determined by 'purely internal' factors. A momentous and arguably undesirable consequence of classical internalism is that, when you know that p, you have a warrant for p which you could also have had in a situation where p was false, had you been in the same internal states as you are in the case in which you know that p. It follows that, by internalist lights, one might have an excellent epistemic standing while having mostly false beliefs (for different formulations of this worry, see McDowell 1982, 1995, 2013; Pritchard 2012, Rödl 2007, chapter 5).

Classical externalists (Armstrong 1973, Dretske 1971, Goldman 1979, Unger 1968) envisage a more robust connection between having a good epistemic standing and believing a true proposition. Typically, they achieve this by saying that what turns a true belief into knowledge is that it is formed in virtue of a reliable mechanism. Crucially, externalists share with internalists the assumption that whatever is reflectively accessible to the subject cannot entail that some empirical state of affairs obtain. But since a reliable belief-producing mechanism does entail facts about the world, externalists reject the internalist condition on reflective accessibility.

Rejecting reflective access is not cost-free, though. Importantly to our overall project, it seems that one cannot deny reflective access while explaining *epistemic responsibility*, namely the idea that part of what it is to know a proposition is to be able to specify what one's reasons are for believing it. Indeed, since the reliability of one's belief-producing mechanism is typically not accessible to one, it is not clear how one could invoke that mechanism in 'vindicating one's entitlement to say things'. (McDowell 2009: 256)

If it were possible to combine an internalist requirement on access to reasons with the externalist requirement that there be an objective connection between a good epistemic standing and truth, that would represent a significant leap ahead. *Epistemological disjunctivism* (ED) (French 2014, McDowell 1982, Pritchard 2012) tries to achieve just this acrobatic feat, by rejecting the idea that whatever is reflectively accessible to a subject cannot entail that an empirical state of affairs obtains. Could ED provide a satisfactory vindication of PW? In 2.3, we will see that there are four large questions defenders of ED have so far not satisfactorily addressed

2.2 Current State of my own Research

My research focusses on intentionality (2008, forthcoming a, forthcoming b), self-awareness and self-knowledge (2005, 2013b, forthcoming c, forthcoming d), and perceptual experience (2012a, 2012b, 2013a). All my work is informed by the conviction that there are figures and concepts of the phenomenological tradition that are highly relevant to the contemporary analytic debate (see especially my 1999 and 2007 for considerations on this aspect).

Concerning perceptual knowledge, I have argued, both in the context of the phenomenological tradition (2012a, 2013a) and in the analytic debate (2012b), for the idea that the fundamental epistemological role of perceptual experience consists in giving to its subject a reason for believing that things are some way. Specifically, I have argued (2012b) that the possibility of *immediate* justification depends on an epistemic relation between facts and perceptual experience: a veridical experience offers to its subject a fact as a reason for believing things, and it is in virtue of this relation that a belief formed on the basis of the relevant experience counts as being immediately justified.

2.3 Detailed Research Plan

Four large questions need to be addressed in order to turn ED into a fully developed account of perceptual knowledge informed by PW. The first concerns the exact nature of the reasons which are supposed to confer on one's belief the special warrant which turns it into knowledge. The second concerns the notion of reflective access to a reason. The third concerns rational deliberation, and the fourth the supposed independence of reasons from the knowledge that they are supposed to explain.

1. Reasons

ED contends that perceptual knowledge that *p* is a question of having a factive and reflectively accessible reason for believing *p*. How should we construe the relevant reason? Most people have hitherto focussed on one candidate, but in fact there are three.

Pritchard and McDowell take it that the relevant reason in cases of perceptual knowledge is a fact: *that the subject sees that p*. Thus, ED could be defined as the view that perceptual knowledge that *p* is knowledge that one has because one's reason for the belief that *p* is that one sees that *p* – this is the option that has received most attention in the literature both by proponents and opponents of ED (see the critiques of ED offered by Littlejohn, forthcoming, and Kelp & Ghijzen, forthcoming).

A second possibility is to say that one's reason is simply the fact that *p*, and that the contribution of the seeing is that of making it available to one. Some of McDowell's writings encourage this view. For example: 'When one sees how things are ... a warrant and cause for one's belief that things are that way is visibly there for one in the bit of reality that is within one's view'. (2002: 280) But in more recent work McDowell explicitly disavows it, on the grounds that leaving out any reference to one's experience in a specification of one's reason for believing what one does renders the

explanation unintelligible: ‘If I am asked to give my reason for believing that there is a hummingbird at the feeder, it would be absurd to respond by simply restating what I believe, and the absurdity is not lessened if in doing so I would be stating a fact’. (2006: 134)

Finally, a relatively underexplored option is to construe the relevant reason in terms of *object* seeing, that is, either as the (seen) object itself (Brewer 2011, Kalderon 2011) or as the state of seeing an object (French 2014). The main challenge for the this third option is to explain how a perceived object, or the state of perceiving one, can rationalize a specific belief about the perceived object, that is, to identify a clear epistemic path connecting a condition of seeing an F-thing to a justified belief that the perceived thing is F.

The question of the right candidate reason is connected to issues such as reflective access and theoretical deliberation, in ways that have not been properly appreciated by disjunctivists so far. In particular, their standard account of reflective access suffers from being developed in isolation from the topic of self-knowledge, while the relation between facts and theoretical deliberation has consequences that have not been correctly understood by them. In order to make progress, we need an inquiry into the possibility of adopting a mixed strategy concerning reasons: when one perceptually knows that p, that is because her reason for p is that she sees that p; however, *seeing that* is ultimately grounded on a more basic state of *object*-perception.

2. Reflective Access

What does it mean to *possess a reflectively accessible reason*? Internalists have surprisingly little to say on this question, apart from statements such as that if we have a reflectively accessible reason, ‘we can know what it is, on any occasion, that constitutes our grounds, or reason, or evidence for thinking that we know (Chisholm 1977: 17), and that a reflectively accessible reason is such that ‘the subject can come to know through reflection alone that she is in possession of this rational support’. (Pritchard 2012: 13) Crucially, if reflective access is characterized in terms of *knowledge*, and if knowledge in general requires the support of reasons, then it is natural to ask what supports the relevant piece of reflective knowledge.

Suppose S’s reason for believing that p is that she sees that p. Does S need to take herself to know that she sees that p *on the basis of reflectively accessible reasons*? If yes, a regress seems to ensue, because S will have to take herself to know the proposition which constitutes the reason for believing that she sees that p, and so on *ad infinitum*. If not, we lose the insight that motivated ED and other forms of internalism in the first place, for if S’s knowledge of her reason for p is not supported by reflectively accessible reasons, she cannot take epistemic responsibility for believing that she sees that p (for similar challenges, see Littlejohn 2015 and Kelp & Ghijzen, forthcoming).

This challenge has not been properly addressed by disjunctivists so far, because they haven’t inquired into the difference between knowledge that p that one acquires by looking at the world, and knowledge that one sees that p. While the former is just a piece of perceptual knowledge, the latter is also a piece of *self-knowledge*, and since self-knowledge is a distinctive kind of knowledge, it cannot be expected to stand under the same requirements or have exactly the characteristics as other kinds of knowledge.

There are at least two possible ways of pursuing this line of inquiry. First, one could point out that ED is a theory of *perceptual* knowledge, and that it is not true that all knowledge must be grounded in reflectively accessible reasons. One way to develop this would be to say that when one sees that p, the belief that one does is immediately justified simply in virtue of a reliable connection between seeing that p and the truth of the corresponding self-ascription. For example, Cassam suggests that we know our *beliefs* because ‘we have and rely on monitoring mechanisms to determine what we believe’ (2009: 12, emphasis added) (see also Nichols and Stich, 2003); it does not seem far-fetched to suppose that analogous mechanisms could be in place for perception.

A very different way of developing the thought that self-knowledge is special is to say that it is knowledge of how things are with an object that one acquires simply in virtue of *being* the object of knowledge (see especially Rödl 2007); thus one would know that one sees that p simply in virtue of one’s seeing that p. To develop this thought one could rely

on an appropriately qualified version of the traditional idea that at least some mental states (assuming that seeing that *p* is a mental state) are self-intimating, that is, being in one of them is sufficient for knowing that one is. Incidentally, this hypothesis provides a direct link with subproject C, where the thesis that seeing that *p* constitutively involves knowing that one does takes center stage, and an argument is discussed to the effect that the truth of this thesis is grounded in phenomenological facts concerning awareness and self-awareness.

3. The Basis of Knowledge and the Entailment Thesis

It is often held (Cassam 2007, Dretske 1969, Stroud 2009, Williamson 2000) that seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p*. Let us label this the *entailment thesis* (ET):

entailment thesis (ET): seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p*.

Pritchard worries that if ET is true, then it is ‘hard to see how it [seeing that *p*] can be part of the rational basis for one’s paradigmatic perceptual knowledge as epistemological disjunctivism maintains’ (2012: 25), and he calls this the *basis problem*. His solution consists in arguing against ET: seeing that *p* is a condition which is epistemically robust in the sense that it ‘guarantees that one is in a good position to gain knowledge’ (2012: 26), although it doesn’t entail belief, and *a fortiori* does not entail knowledge. In the same spirit, McDowell upholds a picture of perception as ‘something in which there is no attitude of acceptance or endorsement at all, but only ... an invitation to adopt such an attitude’. (2002: 278)

However, denying ET is difficult. On the one hand, the evidence given by its deniers is thin (see Ranalli 2013 for a comprehensive discussion of their arguments). On the other hand, French (2012) has offered compelling linguistic evidence in favour of ET, and Cassam (2007) has argued that explanations of knowledge in terms of *seeing that* have ‘a kind of finality that many other explanations lack’ (334) – it seems plausible that this character of finality is in turn explained by the truth of ET (see also Ranalli 2013). More importantly, the relationship between seeing that *p* and knowing that *p* raises issues about rationality and theoretical deliberation that have not been addressed sufficiently.

It is constitutive of what it is to be a rational subject that one should be able to make up one’s mind as to what to believe, or perhaps come to the conclusion that one ought to suspend belief, by considering the relative force of different elements speaking for or against the truth of a certain proposition. Now, seeing that, say, there is a barn, contributes a reason to this rational process of deliberation – reason which may be construed either as the perceived fact that there is a barn or as the fact that one sees that there is a barn. However, whether one actually forms the belief that there is a barn may depend on background knowledge and evidence. If, for example, one has misleading evidence that one is in barn-façade county, one will probably refrain from believing the relevant proposition. But if the reason contributed by the experience is a fact, it becomes mysterious how one could come to suspend belief: one would expect the relevant fact *to settle* the question of what one ought to believe, rather than rationalizing suspension of belief (see also Roessler 2009).

This means that the basis problem is actually larger than supposed by the participants in the debate: the real question is how we should define the basis of knowledge so as to make sense of rational deliberation. The challenge, in other words, is to identify a rational basis for believing *p* that is so strong as to be unavailable if *p* is false, but at the same time compatible with a rational subject’s failure to believe (and know) that *p* if she has misleading evidence that *p* is false – *this* question about the basis of knowledge could not be solved by simply denying ET.

To make progress on this issue, we need to think about the relationship between seeing *an object* and seeing *that an object* is some way. Let us suppose that when one is in perceptual contact with a barn, the reason that perception offers one for believing that there is a barn is *a barn*. Now, (seeing) a barn, because it does not by itself involve the singling out of any specific proposition from one’s cognitive space, seems compatible with the subject rationally forming a belief on the basis of misleading evidence that there are no real barns around. In other words, because there is no

obvious epistemic path from seeing an F-thing to knowing or believing that the thing is F, it seems plausible that a subject to whom a barn is made manifest through perception may fail to realise the epistemic significance of that reason. However, it might be thought that construing reasons in terms of object-perception raises more problems than it solves: precisely because there is no obvious epistemic path from seeing an F-thing to knowing or believing that the thing is F, one might say that even if object-perception is compatible with suspension of belief, it does not make the *acquiring* of belief intelligible – for example Ginsborg (2011) has objected that perception of an object cannot rationalize belief ‘unless it presents the object *as being a certain way*, that is, as having a certain general property or feature’. (135, emphasis added)

We are presented with a twofold task: on the one hand, we need to explain (a) how seeing an F-object can ground a state of seeing that the object is F, so as to have a reflectively accessible and factive support for believing the specific proposition that the object is F. On the other hand, we need to explain (b) why in certain cases one may only see an F-object, not *that* the object is F.

Concerning (a): It seems plausible that the epistemic significance of object-perception should be understood in terms of an *alethic connection* between objects and potentially known propositions. Thus Kalderon notices that ‘the yellowish red of the tomato is a truthmaker of the proposition that the tomato is yellowish red ... It is impossible for the yellowish red of the tomato to exist and the proposition that the tomato is yellowish red to be false’. (2011: 226) In the same spirit, Brewer claims that object-perception is epistemically significant in that it acquaints us with ‘the grounds of empirical truth’ (2011: 143) and thus puts one in a position to know *that* the perceived object is F. The actual exploitation of this opportunity for knowledge might be described in terms of recognizing that the object is F: the subject has to exercise the relevant recognitional capacity or, as Brewer puts it, to ‘*register o*’s visually relevant similarities with paradigm exemplars of F conceptually’ (144) and ‘actually make the judgment that *o* is F’ (145).

Concerning (b): Why is it that sometimes one sees an F-object but not that the object is F? It often goes unnoticed that if seeing that *p* is a rational support that ‘*guarantees that one is in a good position to gain knowledge*’ (Pritchard 2012: 26) as envisaged by disjunctivists, then *seeing that* cannot be a *purely visual phenomenon*. Suppose that you actually are in barn-façade county, but you are looking at the only real barn. Arguably, the conditions are such as to *prevent* you from gaining knowledge, so you don’t see that there is a barn. But if your relationship to the barn is individuated in purely visual terms, then the question of whether or not other things around are real barns should not matter, therefore seeing that *p* cannot be purely visual. It seems plausible to say that you do see *a barn* though, insofar as you are in genuine perceptual contact with a barn. The transition from seeing an F-object *o* to seeing that *o* is F might get stopped in its tracks, as it were, in various ways: one possibility is that the subject does not have the relevant concept; another possibility is the subject is not in a position to apply the relevant recognitional capacity in that particular context, maybe because the environment is not epistemically friendly (e.g., barn-façade county). Misleading evidence might just be another factor which can interfere with the transition in question. If this is right, when you look at a barn in normal conditions but have false evidence that you are in barn-façade county, you do *not* see that there is a barn, and the reason made available to you is just (seeing) a barn, which is compatible with your failure to believe and know that there is a barn.

4. The Basis of Knowledge and the Independence of Reasons

PW is a thesis concerning the explanatory relation between reasons and knowledge. Thus a supporter of PW had better conceive of reasons in such a way that they can play the explanatory role implied by that thesis. Part of what underlies the basis problem is the worry that if seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p*, then seeing that *p* cannot explain knowing that *p*. This worry reflects the assumption that reasons ought to be independent of the knowledge they explain. Let us have a label for this:

Independence (IND): in order for a reason to be explanatory with respect to knowledge, it must be such that it could be possessed by a subject independently of the knowledge in question.

IND can be construed as a modal claim to the effect that it must be metaphysically possible for one to possess the relevant reason for *p* and yet fail to know that *p*. But on a plausible interpretation of entailment, if seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p*, then one cannot be in a state of seeing that *p* independently from being in a state of knowledge, so one of either ET or IND has to go. People assume that the only way to save ED is to reject ET. However, there is a simple and original move which preserves the disjunctivist project of explaining knowledge in terms of reflectively accessible and factive reasons without getting embroiled in controversies about ET: reject IND.

Since IND is normally left implicit, it is difficult to find arguments in its support, and thus it is difficult to undermine its supposed motivations. However, a consideration can be offered which suggests that in fact reasons could explain something even if they are not available independently of what they explain.

The consideration has to do with theoretical and practical rationality. Suppose you are pondering the evidence for *p*, and you hit upon what you recognize as a conclusive reason *R* for *p*. Insofar as you are rational, you form the belief that *p* in light of *R*. But not only that: it seems plausible that in believing *p* in light of *R*, you know that you believe that *p*. Once the question whether *p* is settled from your point of view, the question whether you believe that *p* is settled too. So *R* does double duty here: it settles the question whether *p*, and it also settles the question whether you believe that *p*. But saying that the question is settled is just another way of saying that if you form the belief that *p* in light of *R*, then you know that you believe that *p*. *R* *explains* (in a way that is intelligible from your own point of view) why you believe that *p*, but thereby also explains how you know that you believe that *p* – insofar as you are rational, you cannot be in a state of believing *p* in light of *R* *independently* from being in a state of knowledge that you believe that *p*.

Similar things could be said for practical rationality. Suppose that the conclusion of a practical argument is an action, and that you reason from the premises that you want a beer and that there is beer in the fridge to the action of opening the fridge. Insofar as you are rational, have the relevant power of movement and do not suffer from akrasia, you cannot be in a state in which you wholeheartedly accept the premises as reasons for doing the action independently from actually doing it. It is part of what it is to embody a form of practical rationality that the premises of a practical argument explain your action without leaving it open whether or not you will perform it. If this is correct, there are no obstacles in principle to an explanation of knowledge in terms of non-independently available reasons.

2.4 Schedule and Milestones

The work detailed under this subproject is to be carried out in collaboration with a PhD student who will work in Fribourg under my supervision.

First year: work on the formulation of ED and on the candidate reasons illustrated in the research plan;

Second year: work on the notion of reflective access;

Third year: work on the basis problem, rational deliberation and IND; assistance with the editorial work on the edited collection that we intend to publish;

Fourth year: final draft of the thesis.

2.5 Relevance and Impact

The project of explaining the connection between perception and knowledge in terms of reasons has occupied a central place in modern and contemporary philosophy, especially since Descartes. However, traditional foundationalist internalist projects informed by Descartes's philosophy have always been unable to make sense of the *immediacy* of perceptual knowledge and the epistemic satisfactoriness implicit in locutions such as *seeing that* or *knowing that*. On the other hand, externalism is at odds with the basic insight that perceptual knowledge is essentially intelligible to its possessor.

ED promises to overcome this somewhat stagnant dialectic by delivering key advantages of both internalism and externalism without being encumbered by their respective problems. This subproject aims to give a substantial contribution to the debate on perceptual knowledge by showing how that promise can be fulfilled.

The subproject is expected to result in two kinds of publications. First, there will be papers submitted to peer-reviewed journals. Second, there will be at least one volume, to be edited by the postdoc and PhD students from Warwick and Fribourg, (see 2.5 of subproject A).

Subproject C (Andrea Giananti)

Perceptual Knowledge, Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness

1. Summary

Subprojects A and B have set out two frameworks for investigating the explanatory connection between perceptual experience and knowledge. On either framework, there is a link not only between perception and knowledge, but also between perceptually grounded knowledge and the intelligibility of that knowledge to its possessor: perceptually grounded knowledge is intelligible to one in light of one's own perceptual *experience*, and this naturally issues in a claim to self-knowledge: *I can see that p*.

How should we understand the connection between perceptual knowledge, its intelligibility to its possessor and claims to self-knowledge? This subproject explores a two-step answer: first, perceptual knowledge that *p* constitutively involves a piece of self-knowledge to the effect that one sees that *p*. Second, this is ultimately grounded in phenomenological facts about awareness and self-awareness: all awareness involves a basic form of self-awareness, and this explains why reflective perceivers do not simply find themselves saddled with perceptual knowledge, but find it intelligible how it is that they have such knowledge, and are able to give explanations of the form *I see that p* if interrogated as to why they hold a certain belief or how they know that something is the case.

2. Research Plan

2.1 Current State of Research

Two large questions about self-knowledge are particularly relevant to this subproject: one concerning the supposedly special character of self-knowledge, and another concerning the means that we have of acquiring knowledge of our own minds.

The first question is whether there is anything that sets self-knowledge apart from other kinds of knowledge, such as perceptual knowledge or knowledge by testimony. It is often acknowledged that there is some such distinctive feature, which could be labelled *Authority*:

Authority: self-attributions of mental states enjoy a special authority that attributions of mental states to others do not have.

What explains *Authority*? According to a broadly Cartesian perspective, *Authority* derives from the fact that self-knowledge is epistemically more secure than other kinds of knowledge. A different explanation relevant to this subproject is that in *paradigmatic* cases of self-knowledge, being in a mental state *M* and knowing of being in *M* are, at least for some values of *M* (which may or may not include perceptual experience, depending on how one develops the position), not two distinct conditions, but one – that of *knowingly being in M*. This position, putative proponents of which are Boyle (2009, 2011), Moran (2001), Rödl (2007) and Shoemaker (1994), might be called *constitutivism*: it is constitutive of what it is to be in *M* that if one is in *M*, one knows that one is in *M*. Crucially though, most authors

labelled here as constitutivists (especially Moran 2001 and Boyle 2009) assign a decisive role to our power of making up our own minds concerning a certain subject matter: that is, a subject who rationally reaches a positive verdict concerning the truth of p , understands the entitlement that she has to self-ascribe the belief that p . But since perceiving does not involve deliberating about the truth of a proposition, the connection between perception and self-knowledge has to be sought elsewhere. One of the expected results of this subproject is that there is in fact a common root between deliberative self-knowledge and knowledge of one's own perceptual experiences: they are boot rooted in self-awareness.

The second question concerns the acquisition of self-knowledge. An influential approach says that self-knowledge of at least some of our mental states is 'acquired by answering and asking the appropriate questions about the world at large'. (Cassam 2015: 1) The idea is that if a reflective subject S wants to know whether she ϕ s (believes, desires, experiences) that p , she can simply consider the question whether p is true, or desirable; if she answers the question affirmatively, she thereby comes to know that she ϕ s that p . This feature of self-knowledge is known as *Transparency*, and has been investigated in a number of different ways by philosophers as diverse as Byrne (2011), Boyle (2011), Dretske (1994), Evans (1982), Moran (2001), Rödl (2007), Roessler (2013b) and Soldati (2013b).

Authority and *Transparency* bear on the issue of the intelligibility of perceptual knowledge to someone who has it. The most straightforward public manifestation of the intelligibility of perceptual knowledge to its possessor involves an authoritative claim to self-knowledge: *I see that p*. This piece of self-knowledge does not seem to be acquired in a different way than first-order knowledge that p ; that is, it is transparently acquired by attending to the relevant external fact. What makes it so that knowledge of one's own perceptual experience is authoritative and transparent?

How could we make progress on these questions? It has already been remarked that participants in the contemporary debate tend to treat perceptual knowledge and self-knowledge separately, and that this division is not fruitful. Now we should notice another division: phenomenological reflection on self-awareness is rarely if ever brought to bear on the topic under discussion. Yet, it seems plausible that a better understanding of the nature of the *awareness* that one has of one's own mental states could illuminate the *knowledge* that one has of those states. A central aim of subproject C is to clarify this connection.

2.2 Current State of our own Research

Both Roessler and Soldati have conducted research in areas relevant to self-knowledge, self-awareness and perceptual knowledge (see the relevant sections in subprojects A and B). In particular, Roessler (2013b) has suggested a distinctive analysis of transparency, which emphasizes the connection between knowledge of one's own mental states and mental agency: more precisely, he has argued for the thesis that *in judging* that p , one knows oneself to believe that p .

Soldati (2013b) has offered an analysis of the transparency of belief in terms of the notion of *responsiveness to reasons*, and has argued that the question whether perceptual experiences are knowable transparently in the same sense as belief depends on whether there is some suitable sense in which perception is responsive to reasons. He has also proposed an analysis of self-awareness along the lines of Brentano's (2005, forthcoming c).

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2.3 Detailed Research Plan

In this subproject it is proposed that all awareness includes a form of self-awareness, and that this has a significant explanatory force with respect to the main questions of the overall project. A subject of awareness with a suitable conceptual repertoire ordinarily enjoys episodes of perceptual awareness with the content that p – it perceptually

appears to her that things are thus and so. If the experience is veridical and the subject sees that *p*, the self-awareness that the subject has amounts to self-knowledge: the subject knows that she sees that things are thus and so.

The picture of the relationship between perceptual experience and the content of self-awareness should be as flexible as it need be to be compatible with a variety of approaches to perceptual experience. According to some (McDowell 1994), mature human perception takes whole facts as its objects, and the content of perception does not stop anywhere short of those facts. On this model, the connection between perception and self-awareness is most straightforward: simply having a perceptual experience with the content that *p* is sufficient for knowing that one sees that the relevant fact obtains. According to others (Brewer 2011, Kalderon 2011, Martin 1997), states of seeing that *p* are grounded in more basic perceptual states in which a subject is acquainted with *objects*, rather than whole states of affairs. The proposed picture of self-awareness would say that in the case of acquaintance with an object, the subject is aware of the relevant experience, although that self-awareness does not amount to propositional self-knowledge that she sees that things are a certain way. If, on the basis of the acquaintance with the object, the subject comes to see that *p*, this makes a difference which is relevant both to the content of her experience and to the content of her self-awareness – if the subject sees that *p*, the awareness that she has of her own experience will amount to *knowledge* that she sees that *p*, and this paves the way for her to revert to the relevant fact in reason-giving practices.

It is also proposed that the authoritative character of self-knowledge is explained by the constitutive connection between perceptual experience, self-awareness and self-knowledge. The transparency of one's knowledge of one's own experience is explained by the same means: in enjoying a perceptual experience directed at some object, one is aware of enjoying the relevant perceptual experience, and thus simply perceiving the relevant object in a conscious manner is sufficient to acquire knowledge of one's own experience.

Hypothesis

Self-awareness (or self-consciousness) is, in a minimal sense, awareness of one's own mental states. Self-knowledge is knowledge of one's own mental states. Although self-awareness can amount to propositional self-knowledge, that is not necessarily the case – a creature, in being aware of its pain, is aware of one of its mental states, and thus is self-aware; however, it might be aware of its pain without knowing that it is in pain (if it doesn't have the concept of pain, for example).

A promising approach to awareness and self-awareness is based on insights to be found in the work of Husserl (2001), Sartre (1943) and more recently Nida-Rümelin (2014), Thomas (2003) and Zahavi (2005, 2006). According to Husserl, the experiential stream is characterized by a 'Für-sich-selbst-erscheinen,' that is, by a self-appearance, or self-manifestation. (quoted in Zahavi 2005: 11) This phenomenological feature of the stream of consciousness has a direct bearing on epistemological issues, because according to Husserl, 'the ultimate legitimating source of all rational assertions' is provided by 'self-giving intuitions' in which the presence to consciousness of an object renders facts regarding the object 'self-evident' (Smith 2003: 47); that is, the intuitions by means of which an object is given to a subject are themselves given to that subject.

The sense in which, according to Husserl, one's experiences (intuitions) are given to oneself is peculiar, because the self-manifestation of an experience does not imply that the experience is itself an *object* of awareness. As Husserl himself puts it, that something is experienced 'and is in this sense conscious, does not and cannot mean that this is the object of an act of consciousness, in the sense that a perception, a presentation or a judgment is directed upon it'. (Husserl 2001, I: 273) In a similar spirit, Sartre remarks that this self-presentational character is constitutive of all consciousness, and not something added to it: 'This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness, but as *the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something*' (1943: 20; 1956: LIV). In recent years, Thomas (2003) has elaborated on the Husserlian insights by proposing an *adverbialist* account of consciousness: according to Thomas, conscious states are states that one is *consciously in*. Zahavi (2006) has similarly characterized the sense in which we are conscious of our own experiences as a *non-objectifying awareness*, in that when

one is ‘pre-reflectively conscious of one’s own experiences, one is not aware of them as objects. My pre-reflective access to my own mental life in first-personal experience is immediate, non-observational and non-objectifying. It is non-objectifying in the sense that I do not occupy the position or perspective of a spectator or in(tro) spectator on it’. (6)

Admittedly, it is not obvious how to understand the metaphor of adverbial consciousness or the notion of non-objectifying awareness – for example Kriegel (2009) complains that ‘the view is not entirely clear’ (103). For this reason, we wish to develop the Husserlian view in a way that relies only minimally on the metaphors envisaged by Zahavi and Thomas.

A neglected, but arguably the most straightforward way of establishing a direct connection between awareness and self-awareness, at least in the case of perception, is to examine what is involved in the very concept of being experientially presented with something, and then show that that concept entails that of self-awareness. The bare bone of this strategy could be expressed in the form of a three-step argument:

1) *A perceptual experience fundamentally consists in the event of a subject being presented with something;*

2) *An experiential presentation makes a difference to the subject’s phenomenology;* Other ways to express the same point would be to say that an experiential presentation partly constitutes one’s overall phenomenology, or that there is something it is like to undergo the relevant presentation.

3) *For an experiential presentation to make a difference for the subject, the subject has to be aware of that presentation;* It is crucial how one motivates and interprets this third step. Suppose you are experientially presented with a patch of yellow. If that is the case, there is something it is like for you to be so presented. Now, the third step simply says that you are aware of what it is like for you to be presented with a patch of yellow. Because if you were not, there would be nothing it is like for you to be presented with yellow, and thus you would not be experientially presented with yellow in the first place.

It is also important that the third step should not be understood as implying that being aware of one’s experience means that the experience is an *object* of awareness in addition to the external object. Rather, for a subject to be aware of an experiential presentation just is for that experiential presentation to make a difference for the subject; self-awareness in the relevant sense is nothing over and above an experience making a phenomenological difference to its subject.

Conclusion: *When a subject is presented with something, it is aware of being presented with something.*

Expected Results

This line of argument promises to deliver several advantages: first, the proposed theory of self-awareness is economical, in that it does not postulate any special capacity in addition to those which are anyway required for perception: self-awareness is implied by the very concept of what it is to be experientially aware of something.

Second, it casts light on the metaphor of non-objectifying awareness proposed by Zahavi. To clarify this, let us contrast perceptual awareness with the self-awareness that necessarily accompanies it: suppose that you are aware of the cover of a book lying on your desk, but not of its spine. If you were to change your posture, you could become aware of the spine in addition to the cover, and this would add a new phenomenological quality to your experience. Self-awareness, on the present notion, does not work that way: it is not something that can be added to a pre-existing awareness of an object and cause a change in that awareness, precisely because it is constitutive of any experiential awareness; just as it cannot possibly be lacking from an experience, so also it cannot possibly produce a change in that experience. When you are presented with the cover of the book, your awareness of being presented with it is nothing over and above the cover of the book making a phenomenological difference to you. And when you change your posture, so that a new quality is added to your experience as a consequence of the fact that the spine of the book has come into view, your awareness of that new quality is nothing over and above the presentation of the spine making a difference to you.

Finally, and most importantly, the proposed analysis of self-awareness could cast light on the intelligibility of perceptual knowledge to its possessor and on its nexus with self-knowledge, especially in connection with *Authority* and *Transparency*.

Authority: a plausible constraint on awareness is that if you are aware of something, then that of which you are aware is in principle available to you for reflection and judgement. And this is indeed the case for the notion of self-awareness under examination: if you are perceptually aware of a book on the table, then not only are the book and its features accessible to you for reflection and judgement, but also the fact of you being aware of that book, because, in normal circumstances, you are in a position to judge not only that there is, say, a black book on the table, but also that you are seeing one, so the object of your self-awareness is available to you for reflection and judgment. Now, an intuitive principle is that if one is able to judge that something is the case simply in virtue of having an experience, then one must have been aware that something was the case in having the experience (see also Nida-Rümelin 2014). Therefore, if you are in a position to explicitly articulate the judgment that you are seeing a book simply on the basis of seeing that, that means that you must have *already* been aware of seeing the book before actually making the judgment.

Transparency: when S sees that there is a book on the table, not only does she know that there is a book on the table, but also that she sees that there is one. In that sense, the question whether she sees that there is a book on the table is transparent to the question whether there is a book on the table (in a portion of space that is visible to her). What explains this feature of self-knowledge? If the capacity of being sensorily affected by things in the environment constitutively involves that of being aware of being so affected, then we have an answer: S is in a position to know that she sees that *p* simply by seeing that *p*, because perceptual awareness that things are a certain way involves awareness that one is perceiving that things are that way.

This approach to *Transparency* has two advantages. First, it explains a feature of perceptual experience: that when we attend to our own experience, we don't find any *new* quality. Sometimes it is inferred from this that 'qualities of experiences ... do not really exist' (Tye 2015, section 6). But a different diagnosis is possible in light of the foregoing considerations: when one attends to one's experience, one does not find oneself acquainted with any new quality because one was *already* aware of one's experience before actively attending to it.

Second, it promises a more uniform account of self-knowledge than is usually hoped for by constitutivists. The transparency of belief is explained by constitutivists in terms of the capacity to make up one's mind about a certain subject matter. But this explanation is not available for perception, and sometimes they acknowledge that their account only applies to deliberated attitudes such as belief (Moran 2001, Boyle 2009). But the present analysis suggests that there is a common root between knowledge of one's own experiences and knowledge of one's own beliefs: both the capacity of forming a belief and that of undergoing a perceptual experience are *self-conscious*. Just as the capacity to perceive that *p* is self-conscious in that it involves awareness that one is perceiving that *p*, so also the capacity of forming a belief that *p* is self-conscious, in that it includes consciousness that one believes that *p*. When we rationally form the belief that *p*, we do so for a reason, and when one *does something for a reason*, one knows what one does. Furthermore, as in the case of perception, so too in the case of deliberative self-knowledge appreciating the importance of self-consciousness allows an economic account: the proposed analysis suggests that there are not two distinct capacities, one for forming beliefs and one for knowing what beliefs one has. Rather, there is only one self-conscious capacity: that of forming a belief for (in light of) a reason.

2.4 Schedule and Milestones

The core of the work detailed under this subproject is to be carried out in collaboration with Andrea Giananti in Fribourg, under the supervision of Gianfranco Soldati.

First and second year: work on the topic of awareness and self-awareness;

Third year: work on the connection between perceptual knowledge and self-knowledge; work on an edited collection;

Fourth year: further work on the connection between the phenomenological analysis of awareness and self-knowledge, also in connection with mental states other than perceptual experiences.

2.5 Relevance and Impact

This subproject is relevant to three topics. First, it aims to advance the debate on perceptual awareness and self-awareness, by developing in an original way ideas of the phenomenological tradition. Second, it fills a lacuna by showing the relevance of self-awareness to self-knowledge. Third, it is relevant for self-knowledge in general, insofar as the ideas developed in it suggest that self-awareness plays an important role both in the acquisition of knowledge concerning our own deliberated attitudes and in the case of knowledge of our own perceptual experiences.

This subproject is expected to result in two kinds of publications. First, there will be papers submitted to peer-reviewed journals. Second, there will be at least one volume, to be edited by the postdoc and PhD students from Warwick and Fribourg, bringing together papers presented at the conferences. (see above 2.5 under subproject A)

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