

A Two-Factor Theory of Perceptual Justification

Abstract: By examining the role perceptual experience plays in the justification of our perceptual belief, I present a two-factor theory of perceptual justification. According to this theory, perceptual justification consists in the coordination of two factors: one is the causal connection between one's perceiving something and one's forming a perceptual belief, and the other is one's perceptual experience of this something. One's having a perceptual experience of the something that one perceives causally mediate between one's perceiving something and one's forming the perceptual belief while one's perceptual experience, by making the content of one's perceptual belief in accordance with what one perceives, makes the cause of one's forming the belief, i.e., one's perceiving something, become a reason for one to come to the belief.

Keywords: perceptual experience; perceptual justification; cause; reasonable

Suppose that I see a cup on the table, and therefore come to believe that there is a cup on the table. Normally, we would say that I know that there is a cup on the table, that is, my belief counts as knowledge. So far so good. But it seems that most people think that in such a case, it is necessary for my belief to count as knowledge that I form the belief on the basis of the visual experience that I have of the cup on the table. If by "perceptual knowledge" we mean the kind of knowledge about the external world that we acquire on the basis of perceptual experience, then it *conceptually* follows that perceptual experience is necessary for us to acquire perceptual knowledge. But this does not tell us much, for we are still left in wonder what the role perceptual experience plays in the acquisition of perceptual knowledge and why this role is indispensable.

Many views have been proposed about why perceptual experience is necessary for us to acquire perceptual knowledge.¹ In this paper, I want to argue otherwise, that is, I will argue that perceptual experience is *not* necessary for us to acquire “perceptual” knowledge, i.e., the kind of knowledge about the external world that we normally acquire through having perceptual experience. In light of this argument, I will examine the role of perceptual experience in the justification of our perceptual belief. By examining the role, I will present a two-factor theory of perceptual justification. According to this theory, perceptual justification consists in the coordination of two factors: one is the causal connection between one’s perceiving something and one’s forming a perceptual belief, and the other is one’s perceptual experience of this something. One’s having a perceptual experience of the something that one perceives causally mediate between one’s perceiving something and one’s forming the perceptual belief while one’s perceptual experience, by making the content of one’s perceptual belief in accordance with what one perceives, makes the cause of one’s forming the belief, i.e., one’s perceiving something, become a reason for one to come to the belief.²

I

¹ See Pollock (1974), McDowell (1994), Pryor (2000), Huemer (2001), Alston (2002), Audi (2011), Pritchard (2012), Schellenberg (2013), Smithies (2014), White (2014), and Vogel (2015). Also see Siegel and Silins (2015) for a good survey on perceptual epistemology. Byrne (2016) classifies views on the epistemic significance of experience into three—Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern. All of them hold that perceptual experience plays an essential role in making perceptual beliefs justified, which is necessary for them to count as knowledge.

² As will be clear below, it is one’s perceptual experience of the something that one perceives that *in fact* plays this role, i.e., making the cause become a reason, but it is not that only perceptual experience can play this role.

Since we normally would take the claim that I *see* a cup on the table to imply that I have a visual experience of the cup on the table, to facilitate the argument, let us define another term “see*” in the following way:

S see*s something just in case that a connection similar to a visual connection³ is established between S and this something but S does not therefore have a visual experience of this something.

“Something” here is intentionally left as vague as it could be—it is whatever we think we can see. One can claim that we see objects, or one can claim that we see properties. One can claim that we see only low-level properties like colors, shapes, etc., or one can claim that we also see high-level properties, like the property of being a human.⁴ I don’t need to take a stand on what we see.

What kind of connection could the term “see*” stand for, if one can see* something without having a visual experience of it? We can give a functional characterization of see*ing: the connection established between one and something when one see*s this something would, other things being equal, cause one to form a belief that there is this something. Put it together, we would have a full definition of the term “see*”:

S see*s something just in case that a connection similar to a visual connection is established between S and this something which, other things being equal, would cause S

³ It is similar to a visual connection because this connection would enable the subject to discriminate aspects of the stimuli that are normally discriminated by one’s visual power, such as colors, shapes, etc.

⁴ See Siegel (2006) for a defense that one can perceive high-level properties.

to form a belief that there is this something without S's having a visual experience of this something.

Defined in the way, I see* a cup on the table only if there is a cup on the table: the cup on the table is constitutive of the event of my see*ing it, for no connection could be established between me and a cup on the table unless there is a cup on the table. Similarly, I cannot see* a red rose unless there is a red rose, and I cannot see* a yellow lemon unless there is a yellow lemon. So, see*ing something is a factive event in the sense that it entails that this something exists.

The idea is not that complicated. When I open my eyes, I would see what is in front of me—the event of my seeing something occurs. Either we identify this event with the event of my having a visual experience of this something or we take my seeing something as the cause of my having a visual experience of this something, which is another event. The event of my having a visual experience of this something, on the other hand, would, other things being equal, cause me to form a perceptual belief. This is how we form our perceptual beliefs through seeing, or so we think. The idea here is to strip off the visual experience and therefore any causal role it might play from the process. If seeing something is taken as identical with having a visual experience of this something, then see*ing something is just the functional counterpart to seeing something that results in one's forming the belief that there is this something. If seeing something is taken as the cause of having a visual experience of this something, which in turn causes one to form a perceptual belief, then see*ing something would directly cause one to form the belief that there is this something.

Of course, there is a complication about seeing. When one is hallucinating a cup on the table, we might also say that one *sees* a cup on the table given that one has a visual experience which is, as we might say, *the same* as the non-illusory visual experience that one has when one really sees a

cup on the table, that is, when a visual connection is established between one and a cup on the table. We might also say that one has a visual experience *of* the cup on the table that one is hallucinating. Further, one might have an illusory experience of the cup on the table when one really sees it, in which case we might also say that one has a visual experience *of* the cup on the table. To prevent this complication from meddling our discussion, let us reserve the term “see” for such visual cases in which one has a non-illusory visual experience of the something that one really sees. Accordingly, we would reserve the term “of” for such cases too. As a consequence, we would assume that when one is hallucinating a cup on the table, the visual experience one has is *not* the same as the visual experience that one has when one sees a cup on the table given that it has a different etiology; instead, we would call such a visual experience “a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table”. So, if seeing something is taken as identical to having a visual experience of this something, it is not therefore identical to having a visual experience *as* of this something.⁵

Can we see* anything? Most of us may find it very hard to imagine that we can, but it seems that it is neither metaphysically impossible, nor nomologically impossible. Furthermore, blindsight seems to be a limited case of see*ing.⁶ A blindsight subject, though she would claim that she does not consciously see anything in her visual field defect, could discriminate many types of visual attributes such as colors, orientation of lines or gratings, simple shapes, motion, onset and termination of visual events. She can also have a “feeling” that there has been a change within

⁵ I am not therefore a disjunctivist since I am only making a terminological difference here. Further, the term “illusory” and therefore “non-illusory” should not be taken to imply that an experience has a representational content which would make it either veridical or non-veridical (or, either accurately or inaccurately).

⁶ Block (1995) hypothesizes a superblindsighter, whose case would not be a limited but a full case of see*ing.

her visual field defect. Researches have suggested that there are other pathways that visual information could reach other parts of the brain except the one through the primary visual cortex, which presumably is responsible for producing visual experiences.⁷ But for our purpose, it does not matter if any of us can *in fact* see* anything, for we are concerned with a modal question, namely, whether perceptual experience is *necessary* for us to acquire the kind of knowledge about the external world that we acquire normally via having perceptual experiences.⁸

Suppose that I see* a cup on the table and therefore come to believe that there is a cup on the table. Do I know that there is a cup on the table? My belief is apparently true, and further, it is not accidentally true—I come to the belief *because* I see* the cup on the table. Given that see*ing something is a factive event and that my belief is rightly caused by my see*ing a cup on the table, it is not accidental at all that I come to a true belief rather than a false one. Compare me in this case with a blindsight subject. A blindsight subject could discriminate many visual attributes at a level significantly above chance, so her discrimination is clearly not accidental. Why, then, should we not count as knowledge her true beliefs formed on the basis of the discrimination?⁹

One might object that just like a blindsight subject, I do not have evidence for my belief that there is a cup on the table. If it is necessary for one's belief to count as knowledge that one has evidence for the belief, then, if I do not have evidence for my belief that there is a cup on the

⁷ See Cowey (2010).

⁸ A blindsight subject's knowledge about the orientation of the lines located in her visual field defect would be of this kind. It is "perceptual" knowledge because it results from the subject's direct interaction with the external world.

⁹ According to Block (1995), his superblindsighter would just know, say, that there is a cup on the table, without having any visual experience of the cup on the table that is located in her visual field defect.

table, I do not know that there is a cup on the table. However, if we turn the table around and assume that I do know that there is a cup on the table, then either it is not required for one's belief to count as knowledge that one has evidence for the belief or I do have evidence for my belief. This is the strategy I would take to reply to the objection.

Let us see for those people who on the one hand think that I do not have evidence for my belief while on the other think that it is necessary for one's belief to count as knowledge that one has evidence for the belief, why they think that I do not have evidence for my belief. Contrast the case in which I see* a cup on the table and as a result come to believe that there is a cup on the table (call it "S*") with the case in which I see a cup on the table and as a result come to believe that there is a cup on the table (call it "S"). As noticed above, most people, including those under consideration, would agree that in S, I know that there is a cup on the table. But the only difference between S and S* is that in S, I have a visual experience on the basis of which (it is assumed that) I form the belief that there is a cup on the table while in S*, I do not. If it is a necessary condition for one's belief to count as knowledge that one has evidence for the belief, as those people think, then it must be the case that in S, I have evidence for my belief, which, in turn, must be my visual experience of the cup on the table. So, for those people who think that in S*, I do not know that there is a cup on the table because I do not have evidence for my belief, it is necessary for my belief to count as knowledge that I have a visual experience of the cup on the table in S*. But why? I believe that their answer would be: for otherwise, my belief could not be justified.

It seems to be a truism that evidence for a belief is what justifies the belief, so if I do not have evidence for my belief in S*, then my belief is not justified. However, this truism does not

dictate that in cases like S or S*¹⁰, only visual experience can be evidence. It might be true that in S, my visual experience of the cup on the table is what justifies my belief, but that does not mean that I do not therefore have evidence for my belief in S*. If evidence is taken to be what justifies a belief, then we should not claim that I do not have evidence for my belief simply because I do not have a visual experience of the cup on the table. If evidence is taken to be visual experiences in cases like S or S*, then we should not simply claim that only evidence could make a belief justified. Notice that we may not want to claim that a blindsight subject does not know that the gratings are horizontal just because we know that only through having a visual experience of the gratings.

So, for those people who claim that I do not know that there is a cup on the table in S* because I do not have evidence, their reasoning is fallacious. They start from an innocuous claim that evidence is what justifies a belief, but they assume that in cases like S or S*, only visual experience could be evidence. Though it might be reasonably claimed that in normal cases like S, the evidence that one has for one's beliefs are visual experiences, this does not make it true that in S* I do not have evidence. In S*, what justifies my belief does not have to be a visual experience.

One might, then, wonder what kind of evidence I could have in S* given that I do not have a visual experience of the cup on the table. To answer this question, we only need to consider what might justify my belief: whatever justifies my belief would be my evidence. But we should not put any constraint on what *could* be my evidence beforehand, for an example just considered, we do not want to say that only visual experience could be my evidence. Similarly, we do not want

¹⁰ Cases like S are the normal visual cases, but we do not have a name for cases like S*.

to say that only knowledge or mental state could be my evidence. Of course, we would then have to consider justification on its own without any theory of evidence, which in my opinion is the right approach.

If we want to consider whether one's belief that p is justified before questioning whether one has evidence for her belief such as perceptual experience, knowledge, or other kinds of mental state, it seems that we should consider the following as a criterion:

One's belief that p is justified if it is reasonable for one to come to the belief.

Two things about reasonableness need clarification before we move on. First, here we are concerned with epistemic reasonableness not practical one. It might be epistemically reasonable for one to come to believe that her husband is cheating on her while it is practically not reasonable for her to believe so. Second, reasonableness is relative to perspectives. Due to the asymmetry of available information, what seems reasonable to you may not therefore seem reasonable to me.

Since we are considering reasonableness as a criterion for justification, two kinds of perspective are relevant: the subjective perspective (or the first-person point of view) and the objective perspective (or the third-person point of view).¹¹ There might be a view that whether it is reasonable for one to come to a belief can only be determined from the first-person point of view. Reason, as one might think, is normative, but nothing is normative or has a motivating force on the subject unless the subject could see it *as* a reason from her own point of view. If it is reasonable for me to believe that p , then I must have a reason to believe that p , which would not be a reason unless I can see or recognize it *as* a reason from my own point of view. But to see it

¹¹ We may not want to say that a belief is justified from your point of view while is not from mine.

as a reason from my point of view, it must be known by me or readily accessible to me by introspection. Here, we see a clear route to the internalistic conception of justification. But contemporary epistemology has witnessed a revolution against this conception of justification. For example, according to reliabilism, one's belief is justified if it is formed by following a reliable cognitive process.¹² For a reliabilist, if my belief that *p* is reliable, it would be reasonable for me to come to this belief, but I do not have to know that it is reasonable for me to come to this belief, that is, I do not have to know that the process following which I come to the belief is reliable. Similarly, if it is safe for one to believe that *p*, for those people who adhere to the safety account of knowledge, it would be reasonable for one to come to this belief, but similarly one does not have to know that her belief is safe.¹³ No epistemologist would want to say that it is not reasonable for one to come to the belief that *p* which nevertheless counts as knowledge.

So, it seems that whether it is reasonable for one to come to the belief that *p* could be determined from the objective perspective, too. It should be noticed that reason in this sense is still normative—it is not reasonable for one to come to the belief that *p* simply by wishful thinking, but it is reasonable, for a reliabilist, for one to come to the belief that *p* by following a reliable cognitive process.

Is it, then, reasonable for me to come to believe that there is a cup on the table in *S** from the third-person point of view? There is apparently a reason why I come to believe that there is a cup on the table in *S**—*because I see** a cup on the table. One might accuse of me confusing cause

¹² See Goldman (1979, 1986).

¹³ See Sosa (1999).

with reason: that my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table is *caused* by my see*ing a cup on the table in S* does not make it *reasonable* for me to believe that there is a cup on the table. My see*ing a cup on the table might cause me to believe anything, say, that there is a candy hanging on the wall, but it surely is not reasonable for me to believe that there is candy hanging on the wall when I see* a cup on the table. Similarly, my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table might be caused by my hearing a song played by my iPhone, or by my seeing a painting on the wall. Again, in those cases, it is not reasonable for me to come to the belief even though there is a causal explanation of why I come to the belief.

I agree that this concern is legitimate. However, notice that in S*, my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table is not caused by my hearing a song played by my iPhone, nor is it caused by my seeing a painting on the wall—it is caused by my see*ing a cup on the table. On the other hand, there is a *stipulation* on see*ing: see*ing something, other things being equal, would cause one to form the belief that there is this something. If my see*ing a cup on the table causes me to believe that there is a candy hanging on the wall, other things are *not* equal. Of course, this does not mean it is therefore reasonable for me to come to the belief that there is a cup on the table. For it might be stipulated that see*ing something would, other things being equal, cause one to form the belief that this something is red, but this stipulation would not then make it reasonable for one to come to the belief that the lemon is red when one see*s a (yellow) lemon. Nonetheless, given *the* stipulation on see*ing, other things being equal, see*ing something would not just cause one to form any belief but a belief whose content is *in accordance* with what one see*s, that is, form a *true* belief.¹⁴ That is to say, see*ing something,

¹⁴ If I come to the belief that the cup is on the table in S*, the content of this belief is also in accordance with what I see*.

as a normal cause of forming a belief, is also truth-conducive. I do not see why, then, see*ing something cannot make it reasonable for one to come to the belief that there is this something.

If it is reasonable for me to come to believe that there is a cup on the table in S*, then whatever makes it reasonable is what justifies my belief, which in turn would be my evidence or reason. In S*, my evidence (reason) would be the fact that I see* a cup on the table. Some people might find this claim unacceptable, but it is not uncommon at all that facts could be evidence or reason. The fact that John's fingerprints are on the gun is evidence that he is the murderer. The fact that electrons deviate in electric field is evidence that they carry electrical charge. Similarly, the fact that it is raining is the reason why I take an umbrella with me when I go out. Here I am not equivocating, but being open to the question what could be evidence or reason. As I said above, whatever makes a belief justified would be evidence (or a reason) for the belief, full stop.

Do I then know that there is a cup on the table in S*? I have a justified true belief, and S* is apparently not a Gettier case. In fact, given that my forming the belief is rightly caused by my see*ing a cup on the table, my belief is guaranteed to be true—what makes it reasonable for me to come to the belief is also what makes me come to a true belief instead of a false one. I see no reason to deny that I know that there is a cup on the table in S* except that I do not have any evidence as conceived by an internalist for my belief.

II

If I can know that there is a cup on the table by see*ing a cup on the table, then perceptual experience is not *necessary* for us to acquire “perceptual” knowledge about the external world, i.e., the kind of knowledge about the external world that we normally acquire through having perceptual experience. This point should not be surprising, in fact. Consider a benign God who implants a chip in my brain which would directly transform information that is taken in through

my direct interaction with the external world into true beliefs about the external world without me having any perceptual experiences. I think that in that case, all of my true beliefs so resulted count as knowledge.

But this is not to deny that our perceptual experiences *in fact* play a very important role in the acquisition of perceptual knowledge about the external world, for normally I know that there is a cup on the table by seeing, not by see*ing, a cup on the table. The discussion in the above section about see*ing is only to help get clear what role perceptual experiences do play.

What we have learned from the above discussion about see*ing is that, if seeing something would, other things being equal, cause one to form a belief whose content is in accordance with what one sees, seeing would be a way of acquiring perceptual knowledge about the external world. As for seeing something, as said above, we could either identify it with having a visual experience of this something, or take it as the normal cause of having a visual experience of this something. It does not matter to our purpose which way we choose to interpret seeing—as we will see, we only need a bit adjustment accordingly. Let us assume that seeing something would, other things being equal, cause one to have a visual experience of this something. Then, if I come to know that there is a cup on the table by seeing a cup on the table, all my having a visual experience of the cup on the table has to do is to, other things being equal, cause me to believe that there is a cup on the table. That is to say, my having a visual experience of the cup on the table in such a case only needs to, other things being equal, causally mediate between my seeing the cup on the table and my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table in order for me to acquire this piece of perceptual knowledge.

Do I just downplay the importance of our perceptual experiences in the acquisition of perceptual knowledge? Is it a common sense in philosophy that perceptual experiences are evidence for our

perceptual beliefs? Is it almost unanimously held that it is because we have evidence, namely, perceptual experiences, for our perceptual beliefs that they count as knowledge? If causal mediation is all that one's having a perceptual experience needs to do in the process of acquiring perceptual knowledge, how could it be so important given that any event might play this role?

It is true that any event might causally mediate between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table. It only happens that it is my having a visual experience of the cup on the table that *in fact* plays this role. However, this in no way means that my visual experience is not important for me to know that there is a cup on the table by seeing a cup on the table because it seems that, as *a matter of fact*, no other things than my visual experience can make the content of my belief in accordance with what I see without invoking some mystery.

When I come to believe that there is a cup on the table by see*ing a cup on the table, the content of my belief is in accordance with what I see*. This accordance is crucial for my belief to count as knowledge. First, it makes me come to a true belief; second, by making me come to a true belief, it makes it reasonable for me to come to the belief; that is to say, it makes the cause of my forming the belief, i.e., my see*ing a cup on the table, become a reason for me to come to the belief. If my see*ing a cup on the table causes me to believe that there is a candy hanging on the wall, then, though there is still a causal explanation of why I come to the belief, this does not make it reasonable for me to come to the belief. In the case of see*ing, this accordance is guaranteed by the *stipulation* on see*ing. But there is *no* such stipulation on seeing. For seeing something to be a way of acquiring perceptual knowledge, the content of one's belief, which is a result of one's seeing something, must be made in accordance with what one sees. My seeing a cup on the table might cause another event to occur, but unless this event would, other things

being equal, cause me to form a belief whose content is in accordance with what I see, it would not enable me to acquire knowledge about the external world. Likewise, one event might, other things being equal, cause me to believe that there is a cup on the table, but unless this event is caused by my seeing a cup on the table, it would not make me acquire a piece of *perceptual* knowledge. If my visual experience of the cup on the table is to causally mediate between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming a belief so that the belief formed counts as knowledge, it must make the content of my belief in accordance with what I see. Had my visual experience of a cup on the table caused me to form a belief that there is a candy hanging on the wall, it would fail to enable me to acquire perceptual knowledge. So, it is not an easy job to causally mediate between my seeing *a cup on the table* and my forming the belief that *there is a cup on the table*. As it turns out, my having a visual experience of the cup on the table is, as a matter of fact, the best candidate for this job.

It is of course a big question why our perceptual experiences could make the content of our perceptual beliefs in accordance with what we perceive. It is still controversial whether perceptual experiences have representational content.¹⁵ If they do, then it would be easy to see how they could get the job done: as long as the perceptual experiences are veridical while are taken on their face values by us in forming perceptual beliefs, everything would be fine. If, as other people think, perceptual experiences do not have representational content, then it might be a little complicated. But I think that it is at least clear that perceptual experiences have experiential properties. These properties, on the one hand, are related to what we perceive: seeing a cup on the table would, other things being equal, cause me to have a visual experience

¹⁵ See, e.g., McDowell (1994), Byrne (2009), Siegel (2010), Schellenberg (2011) for a positive answer, and see, e.g., Campbell (2002), Johnston (2006, 2014), Travis (2004, 2013), Genone (2014) for a negative one.

that is different from the visual experience that I have when seeing a candy hanging on the wall; on the other, they would be the source of the content of perceptual beliefs that we form: I form a perceptual belief with this specific content rather than another one, when everything goes right, would depend on how my relevant perceptual experience is like.

If we take seeing something as having a visual experience of this something, then one's visual experiences would not causally mediate between one's seeing something and one's forming a belief whose content is in accordance with what one sees, but, other things being equal, directly cause one to form such a belief. Again, one's seeing something or having a visual experience of this something could make the belief formed count as knowledge because the content of the belief is made in accordance with what one sees, which is identical to what one is having a visual experience of.

Now, we are ready to answer how my perceptual belief that there is a cup on the table as a result of my seeing a cup on the table is justified, that is, why it is reasonable for me to come to the belief when I see a cup on the table. It is because my forming the belief is caused by my seeing a cup on the table while the cause is made to be a reason for me to come to the belief by my visual experience of the cup on the table. Clearly, there are two closely related factors in the justification of my perceptual belief, one is the causal connection between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming the belief; the other is my perceptual experience of the cup on the table.

As noticed above, my seeing a cup on the table might cause me, directly or indirectly, to form the belief that there is a candy hanging on the wall. In that case, there is still a causal connection between them, but it is clear that it is not reasonable for me to come to the belief. Given that my seeing a cup on the table might cause me to form the belief that there is candy hanging on the

wall, if it causes me to form the belief that there is a cup on the table, *other things being equal*, the causal connection between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming the belief would not make my belief justified. Notice that, in the case of see*ing, it is stipulated that see*ing something would, other things being equal, cause one to form the belief that there is this something. If one is instead caused to form another belief, something must go wrong. Since there is no such stipulation about seeing, *other things being equal*, we cannot say that if my seeing a cup on the table causes me to form the belief that there is a candy hanging on the wall, something goes wrong, nor could we say that it is right for me to form the belief that there is a cup on the table when I see a cup on the table. But though there is no such stipulation on seeing as on see*ing, it seems clear that seeing something, other things being equal, would cause one to have a visual experience of this something; and as a consequence, we indeed would say that if my seeing a cup on the table causes me to have a visual experience *as* of a candy hanging on the wall, something must be wrong. On the other hand, my having a visual experience of a cup on the table would, other things being equal, cause me to form a belief with a content that is in accordance with what I see; and again, as a consequence, we would say that if my having a visual experience of a cup on the table instead causes me to form the belief that there is a candy hanging on the wall, something must be wrong. So, my having a visual experience of a cup on the table, as the causal mediator between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table, makes the causal connection between them a justifier for my belief.

If we take seeing something as identical to having a visual experience of this something, then the causal connection between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table would by itself be enough to make my belief justified. But that is only because my visual experience of a cup on the table has already played its role in the causal connection so

that we would say if my seeing a cup on the table, which is identical to my having a visual experience of a cup on the table, causes me to form the belief that there is a candy hanging on the wall, something must be wrong.

Could my visual experience by itself make my belief justified without the causal connection between my seeing a cup on the table and my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table?

To answer this question, we have to make clear what is asked. If by “my visual experience” we mean my visual experience *of* the cup on the table, then the question does not make sense. This is because for me to have a visual experience *of* a cup on the table, a connection between me and a cup on the table must be established, which, of course, normally is my seeing a cup on the table. Either my having a visual experience of the cup on the table is taken to be the connection or it is taken to be a result of this connection. Either way the question does not get off the ground.

For the question to be sensible, by “my visual experience” we must mean my visual experience *as* of a cup on the table. For me to have a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table, it is not required that there be a cup on the table, nor is it required that there be a connection established between me and a cup on the table. My having a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table surely also has causal power, in fact, it seems that it has the same causal power as my having a visual experience of a cup on the table. So, the question is: given that my forming the belief that there is a cup on the table is caused by my having a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table, is it reasonable for me to come to the belief? If the answer is positive, then in the case of seeing, the causal connection between one’s seeing something and one’s forming a belief with a content that is in accordance with what one sees would not be necessary for the belief to be justified.

I am going to argue that the answer is negative. I think that at best we can say that it is permissible, but not reasonable, for me to believe that there is a cup on the table given that I have

a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table. One might think that permissibility is a weaker sense of being reasonable, then I would be talking about the stronger sense of being reasonable, which really matters in acquiring perceptual knowledge.

Consider a case from the history of science. Cathode rays were discovered in 1859 by Plücker. In 1883, Hertz conducted a series of experiments designed to determine whether cathode rays are electrically charged. Based upon the results of the experiments, Hertz concluded that cathode rays are not electrically charged. We now know that cathode rays are negatively electrified particles. The question then is, is it reasonable for Hertz to believe that cathode rays are not electrically charged given the results of his experiments? Put it in another way, is the fact, or Hertz's observation, that in the experiments, the cathode rays were not deflected by an electromotive force existing in the space traversed by them evidence that cathode rays are not electrically charged?

I think that it is not reasonable for Hertz to believe so. We now know that in Hertz's experiments, the cathode rays were not deflected not because cathode rays are not electrically charged but because the brass tube was not sufficiently evacuated. We would now say that Hertz *should not* have taken the results of his experiments to be evidence that cathode rays are not electrically charged because his experiments were flawed. Given that the experiments were flawed, the results of them can never provide any good reason for believing that cathode rays are not electrically charged. This would be the case even if cathodes rays were not electrically charged.

But it is permissible for Hertz to believe that cathode rays are not electrically charged given the results of his experiments. This is because if his experiments were not flawed, the results would be evidence that cathode rays are not electrically charged—there *is* a certain explanatory relation

between being deflected by an electromotive force and being electrically charged. Here, noted that permissibility is not an *ad hoc* notion. It is not permissible for Hertz to believe that he was the favorite kid of his grandma given the results of his experiments.

I think that what is said about the case of Hertz applies to the case in which I form the belief that there is a cup on the table based on a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table. It is not reasonable for me to come to the belief, not because the belief is false (it might be true), but because a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table is not a reason-provider. But it is permissible for me to believe that there is a cup on the table because a visual experience of a cup on the table, which is subjectively indistinguishable from a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table, does make it reasonable for me to come the belief.

To distinguish a visual experience of a cup on the table and a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table, we have to take the objective perspective. If one believes that whether it is reasonable to believe that *p* can only be determined from the subjective perspective, then, since it is reasonable for me to believe that there is a cup on the table if I have a visual experience of a cup on the table, one would surely come to the view that it is reasonable for me to believe that there is a cup on the table if I have a visual experience *as* of a cup on the table. But I believe that reason in the subjective perspective is parasitic on reason in the objective perspective, not the other way around. I am not able to defend my position in this article given the limit of space.

If evidence for a belief is what justifies the belief, then my evidence for my belief that there is a cup on the table in *S* is *not* my visual experience of the cup on the table, but the fact that I see a cup on the table. What my visual experience of the cup on the table does is to make the fact evidence for my belief.

A lemma of the two-factor theory of perceptual justification is that only true perceptual beliefs could be justified. I take this to be a merit rather than a shortcoming of the theory. Given the above discussion about reasonableness and permissibility, it should be clear that it might be permissible for one to come to a false perceptual belief, but that does not mean that it is therefore reasonable for one to come to the belief. Along the same line, we have a solution to the Gettier problem concern perceptual knowledge. When I see a sheep-shaped rock on the meadow, it is permissible for me to come to the belief that there is a sheep on the meadow, but it is not therefore reasonable for me to believe so.

Another consequence of the theory is that Henry in the famous fake barn case does know that there is a barn in the field.¹⁶ Again, I take this to be a merit rather than a shortcoming of the theory. Many epistemologists have claimed that Henry does not know that there is a barn in the field, either because they think that Henry's belief is not reliable or because they think that Henry's belief is not safe or because they think that Henry's belief is not sensitive. But I think their deep worry is this. Had Henry seen a fake barn, he would still come to believe that there is a barn in the field. That seems to imply that had he seen a fake barn, epistemologically speaking, Henry would be in the same position as the one he actually is in. Normally, the counterfactual situations and therefore the counterfactual epistemic positions Henry might be in are not nearby, so it does not matter. But once they are nearby, they deserve consideration. Since Henry apparently does not know that there is a barn in the field in the counterfactual situations and his epistemic position in the actual situation is *the same* as he is in in the counterfactual situations, Henry does not know that there is a barn in the field in the actual situation either unless having knowledge is not purely determined by one's epistemic position.

¹⁶ Goldman (1976) introduced the original case into the literature; it is credited to Carl Ginet.

So, what leads those people to deny that Henry knows that there is a barn in the field is the view that Henry would be in the same epistemic position in the counterfactual situations as he is in in the actual situation. Again, given the above discussion about reasonableness and permissibility, we know that this view is wrong. In the actual situation, it is reasonable for Henry to come to the belief that there is a barn in the field, while in the counterfactual situations, it is only permissible for Henry to come to the belief. In the actual situation, Henry's epistemic position is much stronger.

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