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Looks and Perceptual Justification*

Abstract: Imagine I hold up a Granny Smith apple for all to see. You would thereby gain justified beliefs that it was green, that it was apple, and that it is a Granny Smith apple. Under classical foundationalism, such simple visual beliefs are mediately justified on the basis of reasons concerning your experience. Under dogmatism, some or all of these beliefs are justified immediately by your experience and not by reasons you possess. This paper argues for what I call the **looks view** of the justification of simple visual beliefs. According to the looks view, such beliefs are mediately justified on the basis of reasons concerning how the relevant things look. Unlike under classical foundationalism, under the looks view as I develop it, these reasons are *public*. They are public with respect to both their content and possession: with respect to content, they are not about ourselves and our experiences, and with respect to their possession, many people can have the very same looks-related reasons.

Imagine I hold up a Granny Smith apple for all to see. You would see that it is green, that it is an apple, and indeed that it is a Granny Smith apple. These seeings-that would be instances of perceptual knowledge. But you wouldn't only have knowledge. You would be quite reasonable – “justified” – to believe these propositions to be true.¹

So far, so uncontroversial. Controversy begins, though, when we ask whether this justification would be immediate or mediate.² Some philosophers, called *classical*

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¹ By ‘justified’ I mean only *reasonable*. I do not use the term to pick out an occupant of a theoretical role such as “what carries one a considerable way toward knowledge.” I do think it is plausible that knowledge requires reasonable belief, and that reasonable belief thereby carries one some distance to knowledge, but I think there are cases (and we will discuss some here) in which one has a reasonable belief that is nevertheless very far from knowledge.

² Following Pryor’s (2000, 532) definition, let us say that your justification to believe P is *mediate* just if you have this justification in virtue of having justifications to believe propositions other than P; otherwise your justification is immediate. You are mediately justified in believing that p just in case you have a mediate justification to believe p, and similarly for being immediately justified in believing that p. The reader will note that although a justification cannot be both mediate and immediate, a person can be both mediately and immediately justified in believing that p. Similarly, turning from propositional to doxastic justification, a belief that p can be both immediately and

foundationalists, deny that any of these beliefs about the apple are immediately justified. They claim that only beliefs about the character of your experience can be immediately justified. *Dogmatists*, by contrast, claim that in some cases perceptual beliefs about the external world can be immediately justified (Pryor 2000). Some dogmatists – moderate dogmatists – claim that the scope of immediately justified perceptual beliefs includes at least some beliefs concerning colors, shapes, and other so-called sensible qualities³ – so that the belief a thing is green might qualify – but immediate justification does not extend to beliefs concerning things’ kind properties and so does not include perceptual beliefs that a thing is an apple, let alone that it is a Granny Smith apple. Finally, many epistemologists would say that in our apple case all these beliefs are immediately justified. These are liberal dogmatists. The liberal allows that, in addition to beliefs about sensible qualities, beliefs about higher-level properties, such as kind properties, too, can be and regularly are immediately justified.

In this paper, I focus on beliefs like those concerning the apple. To have a label, I call these **simple visual beliefs**. If a general characterization is wanted, simple visual beliefs are visual perceptual beliefs meeting the following two conditions: (1) they are manifestations of a stable disposition to categorize a perceived object as F upon having certain sorts of visual experience, where F may be a sensible quality or a kind property, and (2) they enjoy the phenomenology of “*just seeing that the thing is F.*” To explain (2) more fully: when you see an apple in good lighting you enjoy a distinctive phenomenology contrasting with cases of conscious inference. You don’t have the feel of reasoning from evidence, but of simply seeing that the thing is an apple.⁴

The liberal’s position is attractive. We don’t seem to draw inferences when we believe the thing is an apple or that it is a Granny Smith apple, any more than we do when we believe it is green. The phenomenology seems equally direct in all three cases. If phenomenological directness is a guide to epistemic immediacy, all three would be cases of epistemic immediacy. But liberal dogmatism is also attractive for its anti-skeptical implications. It implies that the foundations of justification are richly informative about things in the world, taking us beyond the

immediately justified insofar as it is properly based on the factors providing the immediate and mediate justifications to believe that p.

³ I use ‘sensible quality’ to pick out the properties traditionally thought to be directly perceived. Examples in the visual case are color, shape, size, and number. What such properties plausibly have in common is an intimate connection to appearance. Two things will be exactly alike in all sensible qualities just in case they are alike in appearance in the very same viewing conditions. (See Martin (2010) on observational properties.) Kind properties are excluded. A banana and a perfect ringer for a banana might have the very same appearance in the very same viewing conditions. I use ‘kind’ very broadly to include artifactual kinds at all levels of genus and species (e.g., musical instrument, oboe, Fox Renard oboe), and natural kinds at all levels (e.g., animal, dog, Scottish Terrier), as well as just about any sortals we ordinarily apply to categorize objects, again at all levels (e.g., rock formation, mountain).

⁴ My interest, in this paper, is with the predicative side of perceptual beliefs rather than the objectual side, and even among properties my concern is with qualitative ones, not properties such as *being Obama*. I also leave aside, as problems for another occasion, cases in which there is no perceived object, as in cases of hallucination.

mere existence of physical objects, beyond their colors and shapes, to their being objects of various specific kinds – Granny Smith apples, Phillips screwdrivers, iPads, etc.

The paper has two main parts. In the first (sections 1 and 2), I argue that moderate dogmatism is an unstable position. Suppose one thinks that an experience can immediately justify one in believing that a thing has certain sensible qualities. I'll argue that it is then difficult not to open the floodgates, generalizing beyond sensible qualities to all manner of kind-properties. Moderate dogmatists ought to become liberals.

In the second part of the paper (sections 3-5), I argue that when we have justified simple visual beliefs that a thing is F, we are *mediately* justified in believing it is F in virtue of having reasons concerning how the thing looks. These reasons are *public*. They are public with respect to both their content and their possession: with respect to content, they are not about ourselves and our experiences, and with respect to their possession, many people will have the very same looks-related reasons. I further argue that we not only *have* such reasons but that our justified simple visual beliefs are *based* on such reasons. Thus, our justified simple visual beliefs are *mediately* justified in virtue of being based on our looks-related reasons. This is what I called the **looks view** of justified simple visual beliefs.⁵

To be sure, the looks view is compatible with the claim that justified simple visual beliefs are also immediately justified. In forming these beliefs, we might rely on two distinct bases, one providing mediate and the other immediate justification. Nevertheless, I argue in section 4 that we have good reason to set aside this “two justifications” possibility. If my arguments succeed, there is good reason to reject liberal dogmatism (as well as moderate dogmatism). Section 5 turns to the difficult question of what justifies us in believing the relevant propositions about looks, in particular whether we need to retreat to *private* reasons at this point, returning us to classical foundationalism. I sketch a proposal that would make this retreat unnecessary.

Although I focus on moderate and liberal versions of dogmatism, criticisms like the ones I lodge against it apply to many other epistemological views about perception. Similar criticisms apply to other experientialist views, i.e., views that take experience to play an essential role in perceptual justification, views such as the *conservatism* of Wright (2004) as well as classical foundationalism. Proponents of these views, too, think that a large class of simple perceptual beliefs are justified only by broadly experiential factors, factors such as *one's experience, one's justified beliefs about one's experience, or one's justification to take one's experience to be reliable*. Omitted, again, are the public reasons provided by considerations about looks. The same omission is found in nonexperientialist view such as Lyons' (2008) reliabilism, according

⁵ I hope to extend the account beyond looks to *appearances* more generally, i.e., to sounds, feels, smells, etc. However, here I limit myself to looks and so to claims about simple *visual* beliefs.

to which it's enough for justification of a simple visual belief that one's belief be produced by a reliable sub-personal perceptual system. This view, too, fails to give looks their due.⁶

1. The road from moderate to liberal dogmatism

Suppose you agree that simple visual beliefs attributing sensible qualities can be immediately justified. This can seem very plausible indeed. You look at the apple. It might well seem that you can be justified – from your experience alone – in believing that it is green. (In the second half of the paper, I challenge this view, but I grant its initial plausibility.) Nevertheless, you might want to resist liberal dogmatism, and not because of any considerations about looks. The immediate justification story is fine for *green*, you might think, but not for kinds such as *being a Granny Smith apple* or *being an iPad*. You might maintain that there are in-principle limits to what experience can immediately justify, limits that stop well short of beliefs that things are iPads. If all this describes your leanings, you lean to moderate dogmatism.

A visual experience of a table as being red provides prima facie justification to believe it is red, but a typical imaginative experience does not (suppose you've just seen a brown table and now, eyes closed, you visualize it as red). What explains the difference?⁷ Both cases involve conscious experience of a table as red. One key difference is that the visual experience can justify this belief because it *presents as true* the proposition that the object is red, whereas the imaginative experience fails to do so. (Perhaps other factors are necessary for justification as well, such as reliability or proper functioning. For the moment, we set these aside.) If there are reasons for thinking that only propositions about sensible qualities can be so presented, then there are reasons for being a moderate and not a liberal. It isn't hard to find what the reason would be: experiences can only present as true propositions that are among their representational contents⁸; and the representational content of experiences extends only to objects and sensible qualities, not to kinds. Thus, an epistemological debate between moderate and liberal dogmatists appears to turn on a debate within the philosophy of mind about how rich the content of perceptual experience is.⁹

⁶ Glüer (2009) holds that experiences are themselves certain sorts of beliefs about looks, which serve as justifying reasons for beliefs about things' sensible properties and kinds. This sort of view does not neglect looks. However, it comes with the debt of showing how experiences can be beliefs and of explaining how experiences can be justified.

⁷ For a detailed investigation of why perceptual experience justifies but imagination doesn't, see Teng (manuscript).

⁸ If one accepted some other view of the metaphysics of experience, one could recast this point accordingly. For any plausible view of experience, I take it, there will be a difference between properties "**found in**" or "present in" experience and those that are not. Experiences will count as presenting as true only propositions that ascribe properties "found in" experience. (The sense datum theorist will think *redness* is found in experience, insofar as sense data are sometimes red; by contrast, *being an apple* isn't found in experience, since sense data cannot be apples. The adverbialist will think redness is found in experience insofar as one can sense *red-ly*.)

⁹ For a defense of rich content, see Siegel (2010).

The liberal has a good reply: the envisaged account of perceptual justification is false. The envisaged account – call it the *content-based account* – holds that a subject’s experience provides prima facie justification to believe P if and only if P is among its contents. This account is false. The conditional in the ‘if’ direction is too strong. Moreover, once we see what is needed to fix it, the moderate ought to concede that simple visual beliefs attributing kinds, too, can be immediately justified, thus becoming a liberal. I’ll develop these points step by step, beginning with the ‘if’ conditional.

The problem of the speckled hen shows the ‘if’ conditional is too strong.¹⁰ Let me explain. The content-based account implies:

If you have a perceptual experience representing an object x as F, then you are immediately justified prima facie in believing of x that it is F.

I’ll argue there are counterexamples to this conditional. Let’s start with the speckled hen case. An instance of this conditional above is:

If you have an experience of a hen representing it as 48-speckled, then you are prima facie justified in believing it is 48-speckled.

When you look at the hen with exactly 48 clearly visible speckles, you aren’t justified in believing it has 48 speckles, at least without counting. Nor do you seem to have prima facie justification that is somehow defeated. But each speckle is clearly visible and it might seem therefore that your experience represents the hen as 48-speckled. If this is right, we have a counterexample to the content-based account.

Broadly, there are two ways for the moderate who accepts the content-based account to respond to apparent counterexamples like this. One is to deny that the experience attributes the relevant feature F-ness (48-speckledness in this example), and the other is to claim that the subject has prima facie justification to believe the object is F but that this justification is defeated. Let’s consider these in turn.

The moderate grants that the contents of experience include propositions attributing sensible qualities to objects, and numerosity properties are sensible qualities. So, why isn’t 48-speckledness part of the content of your experience when you see the hen? Here is one answer the moderate might give. A property is part of the attributive content of experience only if the experience makes that property available for attention, and 48-speckledness, for you, isn’t available for attention. This is a plausible response. However, if we reduce the number of speckles, however, say, to six or seven – still beyond the subitizing range of normal human beings – the number might seem available for attention. You might not know what the number is

¹⁰ Sosa (2003) raises the problem as a problem for classical foundationalist’s claims about which introspective beliefs about experience are immediately justified. Sosa notes that the problem generalizes to moderate foundationalism, or what we are calling moderate dogmatism. See also Pace (2008).

without counting but you could be suitably sensitive to its presence – “it’s still the same number,” “now it’s a different number” – in ways that seem sufficient for attention to the number. So, your experience would represent the hen as seven-speckled, even though you are not *prima facie* justified in believing the hen has seven speckles.

Davis (2005) and Pace (2008) discuss even more compelling counterexamples in the auditory case. Suppose someone lacking absolute pitch hears a middle C played on the piano. The experience represents it as having a certain pitch, indeed as a C (assuming sensible qualities are represented by experiences). It certainly doesn’t sound the way an A sounds. Play the two serially and they clearly sound different to the person. So, here is a case in which one has an experience representing a tone as being a C and yet one isn’t *prima facie* justified in believing it is a C. Or take the case of unusual colors. Here you might be able, unlike the pitch case, to recognize the color as the same again more easily across longer temporal gaps. Still, you might see a color that is in fact puce, and your experience might represent it as puce, and yet you are not *prima facie* justified in believing it is puce but at best that it is a shade of red.

I conclude it is hopeless for the moderate to argue that in all the relevant proposed counterexamples the relevant property *F-ness* isn’t attributed by the experience. The moderate thinks some sensible qualities are attributed. There is no good reason to think the relevant ones aren’t attributed in the cases in question.

The other way to resist the counterexamples is to claim that they are cases of defeat. The defeat doesn’t take place through any standard sort of defeater – such as “the lighting conditions are abnormal” or the like. What is the defeater, then? The best proposal I know of is that the defeater is the knowledge that one can’t tell whether the relevant feature is present. Let me mention two worries about this suggestion. First, it doesn’t *feel* like there are competing *prima facie* justifications here, one of which defeats the other. Granted, Schroeder (2007) rightly observes that in some cases there are competing *prima facie* reasons even when it doesn’t feel there is competition, because one is extremely weak and the other very strong. But in our cases the *prima facie* justification provided by experience would have to be very strong, because it is the same strength of *prima facie* justification found in cases of visual knowledge, say, that a thing is green. Second, when you hear the middle C tone, how do you know that you can’t tell which pitch it is? Not by virtue of some background evidence. You might have justifiably thought earlier that you would be able to tell which pitch it is. The natural answer is: you know that you can’t tell which one it is because you know you have no justification for thinking it is a C. You know you can’t tell, in other words, because you lack justification and you know you lack it. The converse is misplaced: it’s not that you lack justification (*ultima facie*) because you know you can’t tell.

I conclude that the content-based account is implausible. However, one might hope to retain the idea that experiences immediately justify one in believing a proposition when they present it as true – i.e., when it offers up it up as “face value.” If you lack absolute pitch, then

when you hear the middle C played, although you have an experience representing the tone as a C, your experience does not present as true the proposition *this is a C* as true. Thus, not every content of an experience is a face value of the experience.

The moderate might now concede: not every content of experience is among its face values; still, *only* contents are among face values. The ‘if’ direction of the content-based account might be false, but what the moderate needs is rather the ‘only if’ direction.

However, the liberal has made dialectical progress. If some but not all experiential contents are among an experience’s face values, we can ask what qualifies some contents to be face values but others not. We cannot appeal to background knowledge to explain the difference, on pain of making the resulting justification mediate. What appears to make the difference to whether a content P is a face value is whether the subject is disposed, upon having the experience with the content P (and perhaps also considering the question of whether P), to believe that P simply on the basis of that experience.¹¹ So, if the liberal can dislodge the idea that the dispositions linking the experience with a belief can never introduce new content – that is, that the belief’s content must be conservative with respect to the experience’s content – then she can motivate the liberal view.

Consider cases of partial absolute pitch. I, for example, can certainly recognize many notes when struck on the piano. However, for others, it can be difficult. When A \flat or E \flat is played, especially beyond the third octave above middle C, I can be confident it is one of those two pitches, but I can’t be confident of which, except by an effort of mentally lowering the sound a half step. Suppose an A \flat is played. Now if my experience ever represents sounds as having pitches – which the moderate allows – this would seem to be a case in which my experience represents a tone as an A \flat , despite the fact that I’m inclined to believe, upon hearing it, at most that it is *either an A \flat or an E \flat* . It’s the disjunctive proposition that is a face value of the experience, not the proposition that it is an A \flat . One might suggest that my auditory experience, in addition to having the A \flat content has a disjunctive A \flat -or-E \flat content. However, it’s one thing to think experiential contents can be determinable; it is quite another to think that a disjunction of pitches a fifth apart could be part of the content. I take this to be implausible. Consider that if I hear the notes A \flat and E \flat serially, not knowing which is which, and then a few moments later I hear the A \flat and an D \flat serially (where I can tell that the D \flat is an D \flat), there won’t seem to be any more auditory phenomenal similarity between the A \flat experience and the E \flat experience than between the A \flat and the D \flat experiences, contrary to the disjunctive content hypothesis.

Disjunction isn’t the only problem, so is negation. Many musicians can tell whether a tone within the octave above middle C is an A but not which pitch it is. Play an E \flat and they will

¹¹ Alternatively, for those, like Brogaard (2013), Huemer (2001), Tucker (2010), who distinguish seemings from dispositions to believe, the difference could be explained by appealing to whether the subject is disposed to have the relevant seemings on the basis of the experiences with that content. What I say below about dispositions to believe could be replaced by talk of dispositions to enjoy seemings.

not be justified in believing it is an *Eb*, but they will be justified in believing it is not an *A*. Are we to think it is part of the content of their experience that the tone is not an *A*? The same concerns arise for colors. I might know that a paint chip, which is indigo, is clearly not turquoise. Must this be inference from *this is indigo* to *this is not turquoise*? No, I might not be able to recognize indigo *as indigo*. (I “forgot” which shade is indigo.) Or take an irregular shape for which I lack a name. Can’t I just tell it’s not a square, not a triangle, etc.? Is *not being a square*, etc. part of the content of the experience? The worry is that to retain the “contents only” part of the moderate’s content-based view, one is going to have to attribute rather gerrymandered contents to experience – contents which don’t seem to have a phenomenological basis, and which are posited only to make the epistemology come out right.¹² I conclude that the moderate ought to drop the “contents-only” constraint on face values.

The moderate should concede, then, that whether a proposition *P* is a face value is a matter of whether one has an experience-to-belief disposition linking the experience-type to beliefs/seemings that *P*, and that these dispositions *can* introduce new content beyond that of the experience. What is the barrier, then, to allowing the dispositions to introduce contents concerning *kinds*? The moderate, I think, should become a liberal: so long as the dispositions are noninferential transitions from experiences to beliefs, there is no restriction on the sorts of contents the beliefs can have. This is not to say that any old disposition to move noninferentially from an experience with content *P* to a belief/seeming with content *Q* is enough to make that *Q* a face value of the experience. To go down that path would be to deprive experience of its epistemic role. (Down this path lies epistemological conservatism. More on this below.) Restrictions might well be imposed on the relation between *P* and *Q*. Perhaps the restriction should be *P reliably indicates Q* or *P reliably indicates Q in normal environments*, etc. But, in any case, there is no reason why *Q* cannot concern kinds, even kinds like *Granny Smith* and *IPad*.

If I am right, there is significant pressure on a dogmatist who begins as a moderate to become a liberal and agree that immediate justification extends to beliefs about a wide range of kinds, regardless of the outcomes of debates in philosophy of mind over rich content.¹³

Liberal dogmatism should now seem all the more appealing. It fits with intuitions about cases such as the apple case. It is a strongly anti-skeptical position. And if you are tempted to think that simple visual beliefs attributing sensible qualities can be immediately justified, you should also think that simple visual beliefs attributing kinds can be immediately justified as well. Liberal dogmatism, and not moderate dogmatism, is the view to beat. From this point onward, my focus is on liberal rather than moderate dogmatism.

¹² Silins (2011) gives other examples, which involve degrees of justification. If, looking at an array of dots, I’m immediately justified to some degree in believing there are 10 and to some degree in believing that there are 11. Should we think both of these are parts of the content?

¹³ Silins (2013) reaches similar conclusions.

2. Immediate justification and reasons

In this section, I argue that, *on a standard and plausible conception of reasons*, immediate justification is never justification by reasons. If this is right, the liberal dogmatist account of the justification of our simple perceptual beliefs does not impute to us reasons, at least on this standard conception. This is a limitation of the account only if we do have such reasons. The section to follow takes up that question.

I begin by giving an account and defense of the standard conception of reasons. I am concerned throughout with reasons *to* believe, act in a certain way, etc., rather than reasons *why* one believed, acted etc.

Although we can speak of objects, events, and other non-propositional entities as reasons to ϕ , they are so only derivatively. The dirty cup in the dishwasher is a reason to think the dishwasher wasn't just run. This is only so insofar as a certain facts or propositions about the dish are reasons to think this (e.g., that the cup is in the dishwasher and is dirty). The same goes for internal states: my twinge of guilt is a reason for me to believe I've done wrong, but only because the fact that I have this twinge of guilt is a reason for me to believe this.¹⁴

This view of non-propositional reasons explains a number of otherwise puzzling facts. It is not a basic fact that about the dishes that they are a reason for me to believe that P. Something *about* the dishes helps explain why they are a reason for me to believe P. But this something about them, too, is a reason for me to believe P, and it is not a reason for me to believe this because the dishes are. Nor is it merely a coincidence that whenever a thing is a reason to believe P there are facts/propositions that are reasons to believe P. We understand why a thing is a reason to believe P – and why, more generally, it is a reason to believe the things it is a reason to believe – by taking its being a reason to derive from certain facts/propositions about it being reasons.

So far so good: reasons are fundamentally facts/propositions. Further reflection on the concept of a reason makes it clear that there is a difference between a proposition (or fact) being a reason there is for you to ϕ and its being a reason you have to ϕ .¹⁵ Ordinary talk is loose on how this distinction is expressed. It's perfectly good English to say that if the building you're in is burning down you "have a reason to leave it," even if you have no inkling of that reason. This use of 'have' concerns only the subject whose reason it is and does not imply anything about epistemic possession of the reason. But 'have' can be used to imply epistemic possession. Here we regiment English a bit and use 'has' in 'has a reason to ϕ ' to imply epistemic possession.

¹⁴ Cf. Williamson (2000), Byrne (2005). Williamson's focus is the concept of evidence, but it is natural to think that epistemic reasons would be evidence and vice versa.

¹⁵ See Byrne (2005), Schroeder (2008) and Fantl and McGrath (2009).

The important point about reasons-there-are vs. reasons-one-has is that when one is justified in ϕ -ing by virtue of a reason, it is always by virtue of having a reason. If the building is burning down and you have no idea of this, this does not make you justified in leaving. But when you have that reason, it can. Thus, where P is a reason for you to ϕ , it's only when you have the reason P that it can justify you in ϕ -ing.

Next, what sort of epistemic condition must one meet with respect to P to “have” it, to epistemically possess it? Looking at examples, e.g., “he had a reason to leave the building, viz. that it was on fire,” it seems one must at least be *being justified in believing* that P. If you have only a little evidence that the building is on fire, you might have a reason to leave, but this reason wouldn't be *that it is on fire*, but rather something like *it might be on fire* or possibly *it somewhat likely it is on fire*. Thus, we can say: where P is a reason for you to believe Q, your having the reason P implies that you are justified in believing that P.¹⁶

Finally, suppose that you become justified in believing Q in virtue of having a reason, P, to believe Q. By the above reasoning, you must be justified in believing P in order to have P as a reason to believe other things, including Q. But this is not merely a necessary condition. When you are justified in believing Q by virtue of having a reason P to believe Q, this justification is partly constituted by your justification to believe P. Suppose *that the building is burning down* is a reason I have to believe that *I'll be burnt if I don't leave right away*. Suppose it's a very good reason and so by virtue of having it I am justified in believing that I'll be burnt if I don't leave right away. My justification is not immediate. It comes from my justification to believe I'll be burnt.¹⁷

Thus, I have argued for these premises:

1. If a subject has a justification from a reason for believing a proposition (say, Q), then there is a proposition (P) which is a reason for her to believe Q, and which she “has”, i.e., which she epistemically possesses.
2. Epistemically possessing a reason P requires being justified in believing P, where it is partly in virtue of one's being justified in believing P that one is justified in believing the target proposition Q.

These premises entail that

3. When a subject has a justification from a reason for believing a proposition, this justification is not immediate.

¹⁶ Might having an experience with content or face value P be enough to epistemically possess P? No. At best, this will be enough only when one lacks defeaters. If one has an experience as of red but knows the lighting is such that things that look red might well not be red, then *this is red* is not among the reasons one has.

¹⁷ Because of these considerations, even if P can be a reason there is to believe P, one cannot become justified in believing P because one has a reason, P, to believe P.

Contraposing, (3) tells us that then when a subject has immediate perceptual justification to believe something, this justification doesn't come from having a reason. Hence, from (3), we can conclude that if liberal dogmatism is true, then, in the class of cases in which experience gives us a face value – including the case of the apple and your beliefs that it is an apple and that it is green – we have a justification that isn't reasons-based.

The standard reply to arguments like this is not to concede that under liberal dogmatism what provides immediate justification isn't a reason, but rather to insist that premise (1) is false.¹⁸ Experiences, when they have face values, can be reasons and not only because facts or propositions about them are reasons. Moreover, experiential reasons don't need to be epistemically possessed to justify; they must merely be states of the subject. Thus, justification from experience can be both reasons-based and immediate.

I don't want to insist that we cannot extend the term 'reason' to cover such cases. I merely note this: reasons on this standard and plausible conception reasons – or "Reasons" with a capital 'R' if you will – cannot provide immediate justification. Thus, if liberal dogmatism is true, in a great many cases of justified simple visual beliefs, any reasons of this standard sort that we have are epistemically extraneous. This is because, if liberal dogmatism is true, then in these cases whether we have such a reasons-based justification or not, we have another justification which sufficient for immediate justification.

3. The looks view defended

Do we have reasons (i.e., Reasons) for our simple perceptual beliefs? Consider the apple and your belief that it is an apple. Intuitively, you do have a reason to believe it's an apple: *it looks like an apple*. We have such reasons in cases in which we visually categorize things with the "just see" phenomenology as apples, Granny Smiths, as well as green, round, etc. We have such reasons, that is, for a great many simple visual beliefs.

One might think that if we want to acknowledge the place of reasons in perceptual justification, we should turn to familiar experientialist views that invoke reasons, such as classical foundationalism or Wright-style conservatism. On these views, perceptual justification is always exclusively mediate, and we can see such justification as coming from reasons. But note the character of the reasons on these views: they are propositions about one's experience (perhaps that it has a certain face-value) and propositions about the reliability of one's experiences. Thus, these reasons are propositions about oneself and one's mental life. And they are not shared. When someone else looks at the same apple you do, they have similar but distinct reasons – propositions about *themselves* and *their* mental life. So the reasons are private.

¹⁸ See Pollock (1975) and Conee and Feldman (2004, 289ff) for an account in which experiences are reasons/evidence. See also Smithies (forthcoming).

However, our reasons are public in these very senses: they are not about ourselves and our experiences and they can be fully shared by many subjects (who need know nothing about one another). My reason for thinking it is an apple is that *it looks like an apple*. This isn't about me or my experiences. It is public with respect to its content. Moreover, *you* have this same reason when you look at the apple, not merely a different but similar reason. It is public with respect to possession.

In what follows I will defend the following view, where looks-related reasons, here and throughout, are understood as public rather than private:

The looks view concerning propositional justification:

In cases in which one has a justified simple visual belief that an object is F, one has a looks-related reason to believe that it is F that justifies one in believing that the thing is F.

In sections 3.1 and 3.2, I defend this view. In 3.3, I argue, in addition, that our simple visual beliefs, when justified, are justified in virtue of being *based* on our having looks-related reasons. Thus, I extend the case for the looks view concerning propositional justification to doxastic justification, giving us the conclusion that the full **looks view** is correct: our justified simple visual beliefs are mediately justified in virtue of our having looks-related reasons.

3.1. Patterns of defeat

Let's begin with predictions about defeaters. There are two ways of undermining a line of support from reasons: one is to attack the reason, the other to attack its connection to the target proposition. If whenever we have a justified simple visual belief that a thing is an F we also have a looks-related reason to believe the thing is an F, then given these two ways of undermining a line of support from reasons, strong evidence against the relevant looks-related propositions or against the link between them and the proposition that the thing is an F should give rise to defeat. We can then ask whether these predictions of defeat are correct. If you are given the relevant information that would undermine a reason-based justification if you had one, do you lose a justification you had before? As we will see, the answer appears to be *yes*. In fact, though, in each of the examples below, it seems one not only loses *a* justification one had; one ceases to be justified – one loses *all* the justifications one had.

Let's first consider cases of defeaters that are evidence against the relevant looks proposition. Suppose I love the sound of an oboe and can recognize it well from recordings and in concerts (though from my cheap seats I can't usually see the oboes at all well.) But suppose I've gotten them mixed up, by sight, with clarinets. We can imagine this is due to reading an otherwise reliable book that contains a mislabeled photograph. Show me a clarinet and I'll think it is an oboe. My mistake isn't verbal. I do not use 'oboe' to mean clarinet. I use it to mean *oboe*. Now, suppose, you've set up an identification task for me. You've showed me an instrument, about which I had no previous information, and asked me what it is. I declare it is an oboe,

expressing my visual belief that it is an oboe, presumably a justified belief. You, who know the looks of oboes, tell me: “you’ve mixed up clarinets and oboes; this is not what oboes look like.” Intuitively, it seems I no longer have a justification. I should give up my belief.

One might worry that my justification is defeated in such cases because the information about looks acts as a rebutting defeater. If so, we can add that that you preface your remark with “This just so happens to be an oboe disguised to look like a clarinet, but...”¹⁹ This still seems to be a case in which I have lost a justification I had one. It’s just that, at the same time, I’m given a new independent justification.

Further, one might worry about the following kind of case.²⁰ The leaves of willow oaks don’t have the characteristic “oak tree leaf” look. Still, their leaves do have a characteristic sort of look. You might develop a categorization skill with respect to such leaves, so that you can have a justified belief *this is an oak leaf* when you see such a leaf. In such a case the evidence *this is not what oak leaves look like* need not lead to any sense of defeat. (You might reply: “I know this isn’t what oaks leaves generally look like; still, it’s an oak leaf.”). Doesn’t this show that the defeater predictions for the looks-related reasons view aren’t borne out in some cases? No. One’s looks-related reason for *this is an F* need not in every case be *this has the look characteristic of Fs*. In this case, plausibly your reason is something like *this is a look of a certain kind of oak leaf*. Evidence against the latter will seem to give rise to defeat, as expected on the looks-related reason view. (In my discussions, I usually focus on the common *has the F look* or *looks like an F* reason, but this is an oversimplification. The appropriate looks-reason will vary from case to case. The character of the categorization skill employed is the key to determining the appropriate looks-reason.)

Next, we consider the prediction that evidence weakening the support relation between the relevant looks-propositions and the target proposition should also give rise to defeat. Suppose in an ordinary identification case, I have a justification for thinking *this is an oboe* from the reason *this looks like an oboe*. We’d expect that evidence that the looks of things in the particular situation are misleading as to their true identity would defeat this justification, leading to defeat. And this is what we find. There are many examples of this. Suppose you tell me that *many clarinets in this shop have been made to look like oboes*. It seems I whatever justification I had to believe it is an oboe is severely reduced.

What I have argued here about simple visual kind beliefs applies *mutatis mutandis* to simple visual beliefs about sensible qualities. Suppose, I acquire evidence that I’m wearing a contact lens with a small red spot and the projection of a white teacup across the room perfectly

¹⁹ For contrast, compare a case in which someone ignorant of the machinery of motion perception believes he sees an object move, thinking himself to have tracked it with his eyes. Suppose you point out to him that no copy of an eye-moving motor signal was generated. Without further explanation of how this affects motion perception, none of his justifications has been undermined.

²⁰ Thanks to Nico Silins for raising a worry much like the one discussed here.

aligns with that small red spot. It will seem to me that I've lost a justification I had. On the looks view of propositional justification, there is an explanation why: the evidence I'm wearing the special contact lens defeats my justification to believe that the object looks red, which is an essential element in a line of justification for my belief that it is red. Other sorts of defeaters are more common and, once again, easily explained under the looks view of propositional justification. For instance, when we gain information that the way things look in this situation isn't a good indication of their true colors (this can obviously happen for red as well), this can obviously give rise to defeat. This needn't always involve unusual lighting conditions. A blue square might look gray in certain backgrounds, or when juxtaposed with certain other objects, even viewed in normal lighting. If a person knows about these contrast effects and has evidence that they obtain in her particular case, this gives rise to defeat.

So, the defeat-related predictions issued by the looks view of propositional justification are borne out. Still, the liberal dogmatist might not be impressed. She might claim that her view, too, predicts the same patterns, because counterevidence about looks or about the relation between looks and reality can defeat one's *immediate* justification from experience. Such evidence is evidence that one could easily have had one's experience despite the fact that the thing seen is not an F, which is a classic form of undermining evidence for justification from experience. Thus, one has indeed lost the justification one has, but we needn't think that there was a justification from a looks-related reason that one has lost. Rather, one has lost an immediate justification.

There is, however, a certain cost for the liberal dogmatist in making this reply. It takes substantial knowledge to put together an undermining defeater for one's experiential justification from the defeaters concerning looks. One needs to be able to see that one could easily have had one's experience while not looking at an oboe when one is informed of the likes of: (a) *that's not what oboes look like* (even though it is an oboe); (b) *this is a situation in which many non-oboes look like oboes*; or (c) *here is what an oboe looks like (showing picture)*. We have no difficulty in appreciating the defeating power of (a) – (c). On the looks view, their defeating power is easily explained. On liberal dogmatism, more complicated inferences or background knowledge are required to explain it. The cost I mention is not in accepting some implausible thesis about the knowledge we have about the relation between looks and experiences. Rather, it is dialectical: the liberal must posit substantial knowledge of the relation between how things are, how they look and what our experiences are in order to explain the facts of defeat; she cannot then later, when it suits her, insist the looks-theorist posits substantial knowledge about looks that ordinary folk lack.

3.2. Epistemic dependence and a straightforward argument for the looks view concerning propositional justification

The liberal, then, has a response to the defeater argument. However, this response leaves open the possibility that there is an important sort of epistemic dependence relation between the

relevant looks propositions and proposition that the thing is an F. This dependence relation will be a key premise in a better argument for the looks view.

Consider again the oboe identification case. Like ordinary adults in this sort of case you will understand the proposition that the thing looks like an oboe. This is plausible, and as we saw above, the liberal is in no position to deny it. Now, as we saw above, if you become justified in believing that it *doesn't* look like an oboe, you'll cease to be justified in believing it is an oboe. Suppose, though, that you're neither justified in believing nor in disbelieving the proposition that it looks like an oboe; rather, you're justified in suspending judgment on the matter. Could you still be justified in believing it *is* an oboe? This is hard to accept. Certainly if you announced aloud, "I can't say if it looks like an oboe or not, but whether it looks like an oboe or not, it is an oboe," someone overhearing you would think that you must have had some other grounds – independent of your use of your visual oboe-categorization skills – for thinking the thing was an oboe. If you had just heard it played, or overheard someone call it an oboe, this remark could be explained. But if it's clear that you're simply going on your visual categorization skills and take yourself to be just seeing that it is an oboe – that is, if it's clear that you're forming a simple visual belief that it is an oboe – it will be hard to make sense of you as also suspending judgment on *it looks like an oboe* as well as other relevant supporting looks propositions (e.g., *it looks like a certain kind of oboe*).²¹ Why would it be so hard to make sense of this combination of states? We have a smooth explanation if we understand these facts about what makes sense and what doesn't as reflecting the fact that one must be justified in believing the relevant looks proposition – which, in the oboe identification case for the normal perceiver, would be the proposition *it looks like an oboe* – in order to be justified in having the simple visual belief.²² Without the assumption that one must be justified in a relevant looks proposition in order to be justified in believing it is an oboe, it is difficult to see why this combination of states would make no sense, i.e., would be irrational.

So, I conclude that in this oboe identification case, in order to be justified in having the simple visual belief that it is an oboe, a subject must be justified in believing the relevant looks proposition, which for most of us would be *it looks like an oboe*. Moreover, it is not as if one's justification for believing the looks proposition comes from one's justification for believing it is an oboe in these cases. If it did, we would expect it to disappear if one came to have reasons to think it wasn't an oboe after all. Yet there are certainly reasons one could come to have to think it isn't an oboe which one would leave the justification to think it looks like an oboe untouched, e.g., that it is made of wax, that it isn't a musical instrument. It thus appears that, in order to be

²¹ The evening before writing this footnote my wife and I took a walk on a country trail. We saw something in the distance. She said, "could it be a building? or is it a big pile of sand?" I said, "it's a building." She asked, "how can you tell? It looks like a pile of sand." My answer was that I knew there was a building there, because I saw a sign a ways back. Imagine, counterfactually, we both knew I had no such independent evidence about what the thing was. Then if I had said, "from its looks, I have no idea of what it is, but it is a building," my wife would have been perplexed indeed.

²² For a discussion of the relation between clashing combinations of attitudes and justification, see my (2012). My discussion draws from Broome's (2002) discussion of the relation between rationality and reasons.

justified in believing it is an oboe, one must also be *independently* justified in believing it looks like an oboe.

So, in order for your oboe belief to be justified in this case, you have to be independently justified in believing *it looks like an oboe*. Moreover, as we saw in the section on defeaters, in order to be justified in the oboe belief, you must not have defeaters for the reason-link between *it looks like an oboe* and *it is an oboe*. Putting these together, it follows that in order for your oboe belief to be justified, you have to have a justification to believe it is an oboe from the reason *it looks like an oboe*. Similar arguments establish this for other justified simple visual beliefs. We need only ferret out the appropriate looks-proposition from the nature of the categorization skill used and rerun the argument.

All this gives us a **straightforward argument** for the looks view concerning propositional justification. Take a case of a justified simple visual belief that a thing is an F. There will be an appropriate looks proposition that one must be independently justified in believing in order to be justified in believing it is an F. Moreover, this looks proposition will *support* the belief that the object is an F (this support relation will not be defeated). But if one is independently justified in believing such a looks proposition, which supports the target proposition that the thing is an F, and this support is undefeated, then one will have a mediate justification from a looks-related reason to believe the thing is an F. Extending the same argument to beliefs attributing sensible qualities, we arrive at the looks view concerning propositional justification.

3.3. Doxastic justification?

Suppose the looks view concerning propositional justification is true. Is there any reason to think that we also *base* our beliefs in these cases on these reasons, in whatever way is necessary for these reasons to make our simple visual beliefs doxastically justified? If so, we would have grounds for what I'll call *the looks view* full stop:

The looks view: in cases in which one has a justified simple visual belief that a thing is F, one's belief is justified in virtue of being based on one's possession of looks-related reasons that justify one in believing that the thing is F.

One obstacle to taking our simple visual beliefs to be based on beliefs about looks is a worry about whether we ordinarily have beliefs about looks in the relevant cases. Let's consider how this might go in our apple case. I look at the apple and I believe it is an apple. Now, do I form beliefs about its looks? Sure, I could, but I do I? We're invited to think: *no*. So, I don't believe it is an apple based on beliefs about its looks, and yet my belief is a justified simple visual belief, and so the looks view must be wrong.

This style of argument has its uses (e.g., consider my example in note 19), but it should be used with care. Consider the apple again. In ordinary cases of seeing an apple, one doesn't

form the belief the thing looks like an apple in the sense of *making a conscious judgment* to this effect. Still, one obviously knows and so believes it looks like an apple. When I ask you, “does it look like an apple?” your answer is “of course it does.” It doesn’t seem to you that you are forming a belief; you already had the belief.²³ Whether we want to say the belief/knowledge is implicit, tacit, or whatever, it is there. And it can do epistemic work. Thomas Senor (2008) gives a nice example of the epistemic work of a belief not currently manifested in judgment: I look at a sunset and judge that it’s a beautiful sunset. I don’t consciously judge that it’s evening. But I know it’s evening, and this is surely part of my justification for believing it is a beautiful sunset. Numerous other examples demonstrate the same thing.²⁴ Moreover, as we noted in 3.1, the liberal herself must acknowledge knowledge about the relations between how things are, how they look and how we experience them in order to explain patterns of defeat.

So, I take it that we normal adults (and children at early ages²⁵), have looks-beliefs, and our having them in the way we do makes them available to play roles in doxastic justification of further beliefs. However, even if they are available to play such roles, we need reason to think they do in fact often play such roles. I try to provide this in the remainder of this section.²⁶

If the looks view were true, then in ordinary life we would presumably debate, explain, and generally think and talk in ways that would be appropriate if it were true. (The idea is that if it were true, we would implicitly be on to its truth in our ordinary thinking and talking.) Thus, we can check whether we debate, explain, etc. in the relevant ways. Such evidence is of course defeasible – e.g., it could be defeated if our best psychological theories entail that we do not rely on beliefs about looks.²⁷ But it is evidence nevertheless. I’ll focus on simple visual beliefs about kinds.

3.3.1 Evidence from dialectics:

²³ Contrast this sort of case with one in which a person does really form a belief. I have a friend who is a spitting image of Samuel Adams. I might ask you, about this friend, doesn’t he look like Sam Adams? Your response: “you know, he does! I never would have thought of that.”

²⁴ Silins (2013) gives the example of seeing a DVD still in its wrapping near a friend’s TV. You believe that she hasn’t watched the movie yet. This belief is justified, and presumably this justification – this doxastic justification -- is *mediate*, despite the fact that one goes through no conscious reasoning involving all the relevant pieces of information. One believes all these pieces of information, but doesn’t consciously affirm them. The same is true of the case in which you believe I just missed my train.

²⁵ John Flavell (1986) and colleagues have argued that children do not grasp the appearance/reality distinction until about the age of four. However, see Hansen and Markman (2005) for a convincing response, based on studies that attend carefully to the pragmatics of asking children questions about looks. See McGrath (manuscript) for further discussion of these matters.

²⁶ An interesting proposal, which I will not pursue here, is that one can be credited with beliefs and knowledge about the looks of a kind of thing even if one’s beliefs do not involve the application of the concept *looks*. Suppose a person, for instance a child, knows that apples are *W*, where *W* is the look of apples and where in having the knowledge the subject conceives of this look in an appropriately direct way. On the proposal in question, this is sufficient to know what apples look like. If this proposal is correct, worries about whether young children have the concept of *looks* would not gain traction. Similar conclusions would apply to animals capable of visually justified beliefs.

²⁷ But see the previous two footnotes.

If we relied on looks-related reasons for our simple visual kind beliefs, we'd expect that debate over the truth of the belief that *this is an F* between two people looking at the same object and both relying solely on their visual F-categorization skills would regularly lead to discussion of the relevant looks-propositions – either whether these propositions are true or whether, even supposing they are, they are strong enough evidence for the belief that this is an F. This is what we find. For example, suppose you and a friend look at an animal in the distance about which you have no prior information. “See the elk,” you say. Your friend says, “It’s not an elk. It’s just a deer.” You say: “but it looks like an elk – see its big rack!” Friend says: “not really – do you know what an elk looks like?” Such examples are easy to multiply. I’m not claiming one *must* turn to propositions about looks when doubts about a simple visual belief are raised, but only that is entirely natural. It does not feel like the introduction of new line of evidence, but rather like one subject matter – the thing’s looks – you’re *using* to get at another – the kind of thing it is.

3.3.2. Explaining oneself in cases of false judgments:

If we relied on looks-related reasons for our simple visual kind beliefs, we'd expect that in a case in which the object seen didn't have the property one thought it had, one could and would often explain why one believed what one did by referring to its looks. Doing so would be to show one's belief to have been reasonable in light of the evidence. Suppose you see the lawn ornament deer and excitedly whisper to your son, “ooh, see the deer there.” It then becomes apparent it isn't a deer. “Dad, why did you think it was a deer?” Answer: “well, it did look like a deer from back there, didn't it?” Compare this to: “I had an experience of it being a deer” or even “it looked *to me* like a deer from back there.” Similar considerations apply to explaining others' false judgments: “Dad thought it looked like a deer.”

3.3.3. Unclear cases:

If we relied on looks-related reasons in our visual kind beliefs, we'd expect that in cases in which one is trying to figure out whether to believe a thing one sees is an F, and in which the answer wasn't obvious, one would consciously consider whether various looks-propositions are true. In reasoning out-loud with someone else trying to discover the same thing, we'd expect this as well. This is what we find. You look at the bird at the feeder. “What sort of woodpecker is it?” “It looks like a Downy, but like a Hairy, too; hmm, more like a Hairy – see how big it is.”²⁸

²⁸ Are the dialectical, explanation, and unclear-cases predictions borne out in the case of simple visual beliefs about sensible qualities? Since the connection between looking a color and being that color is tighter than that between looking like an oboe and being one, we should expect there to be fewer cases in which the topic whether it looks a certain color should arise dialectically. Still, it can arise. If I say, “it's gray” and you disagree, “I don't think it's gray” and the perceptual conditions aren't obviously ideal, I might want to check that we agree at least that it looks gray – whether it is gray is something we can work out by moving the chip onto a white background.

As far as explanation is concerned, we can indeed and do refer to things looking a certain color when we explain false beliefs that a thing is that color (say in a color contrast case). “Well, I see it isn't gray, it's blue; but it sure looked gray.” For some of the non-basic chromatic colors, we can easily make mistakes in judging whether a thing looked the color. Imagine a color contrast illusion in which a square figure looks puce but isn't. The figure is

All this is evidence in favor of the looks view.

4. Two Justifications?

As mentioned earlier, the looks view is not incompatible with liberal (or moderate) dogmatism. It could be that in many cases in which one has a looks-related reason and so a mediate justification for P one also has an immediate justification from experience to believe P, and that one's belief is based on both of these justifications. One's justification might be over-determined. In this section, I raise doubts about this possibility.

I start by finding a crack in the two justifications mantle: a case in which one has a justified simple visual belief *with* a mediate justification from a looks-related reason but *without* an immediate justification. The case is the mix-up case. I've visually mixed up clarinets and oboes. Suppose a clarinet is before me. I have a justified simple visual belief that the thing I see is an oboe. What justifications – what propositional justifications do I have, relying on which could give me this doxastic justification?

I have a justification from looks-related reasons. Note that I am justified in believing it to look like an oboe. To insist otherwise – to think that I can't be reasonable in thinking this unless it *did* look like an oboe – is to demand too much for justification as reasonableness. I might have learned this "skill" from a book an otherwise reliable book in which the instruments are accidentally mislabeled. Hopefully, such acquisitions of "skills" don't preclude us from having justified beliefs about looks. Even reliabilists and other externalists should accept as much. But if I am justified in believing that the thing looks look an oboe, and I have no defeaters for this reason, it seems I am justified in believing it is an oboe. That is: I have a justification from looks-related reasons to believe it is an oboe.

Next, let's ask: do I have immediate justification from experience to believe that it is an oboe? If not, then we have a case of a justified simple belief that lacks an immediate justification. I will argue that even the liberal dogmatist should concede that I lack such immediate justification in this case.

My argument is as follows, in outline. Either the experience includes kinds in its content or it doesn't. Either way, the only way to see how the experience could provide immediate justification for the oboe-belief is by its disposing me to have a noninferential oboe-belief/seeming. But such dispositions can explain immediate justification only if some strong form of epistemological conservatism is true, one which makes experience irrelevant to

not vermillion and doesn't look vermillion. I say "it's vermillion." (I do have the public concept *vermillion* and know vermillion is roughly reddish, but I mix it up with puce.) You move the figure to a white background, and I say, "ah, I guess it isn't vermillion." You ask me, "why did you think it was vermillion?" My answer: "it looked vermillion." You then show me a vermillion square on Google Image. You ask, "why did you think it was vermillion?" My answer: "well, I thought the thing you showed me looked vermillion, but I was wrong about what vermillion looks like." In the case of basic colors, like red, this sort of explanation is more unusual.

immediate justification, contrary to liberal dogmatism. Thus, I conclude that the liberal dogmatist ought to deny that there is immediate justification in the oboe/clarinet mix-up case. Let's go through this in detail.

Suppose in the mix-up case my experience includes kinds in its content. If it includes *being a clarinet*, our argument is simple: an experience attributing this property presumably cannot immediately justify a belief that the thing is an oboe. Certainly there is no reliable connection, in actual fact or in normal conditions, between these incompatible kinds. Could the content include instead *being an oboe*? How could this get to be part of the content of my experience? Not through the experience's being of a type that is tokened in the presence of oboes – the experience-type I enjoy in the example is caused by clarinets and not oboes. If my experience has *being an oboe* as part of its content, this would have to be because the experience disposes me to form the oboe-belief noninferentially in response to it. (This itself is a very surprising thesis. Could an experience get to have the content *that is a ghost* if I am disposed to respond to it by believing *that is a ghost*?) But if this is what makes it the case that the experience has an oboe-content, it presumably must also be what is making it the case that it immediately justifies me in having the oboe belief.²⁹

Suppose instead that the content of my experience doesn't include kinds. Assume the experience merely attributes various sensible qualities to objects. Could it justify me immediately in the oboe belief? There certainly isn't a reliable connection in the actual world or normal worlds between the content of the experience I have when looking at clarinets – contents attributing clarinet-ish sensible qualities – and oboes. Here again, it seems that it must be the fact that the experience disposes me to form the noninferential oboe-belief/seeming that explains how I could have the immediate justification.

So, in the mix-up case, whether the content of the experience includes kind properties or not, we have the same upshot: it's the disposition to have oboe-beliefs/seemings that accounts for the immediate justification. But how would such a disposition account for immediate justification unless a strong form of epistemological conservatism is true – a form such as this: being noninferentially disposed to believe P (or to have it seem to one that P) prima facie justifies one in believing that P? One can then ask why we shouldn't just apply such a conservative principle to explain perceptual justification in general. The liberal, we saw, already had to appeal to dispositions to form beliefs or undergo seemings. Her hope was to keep experience relevant by imposing constraints on the relation between such dispositions and the experience's content (the content it had that didn't depend purely on the disposition to form beliefs/seemings) – constraints such as reliable indication. These constraints provided “friction”

²⁹ One metaphorical but intuitive idea motivating the idea that taking an experience at face value is a source of justification is that an experience's having a face value is a matter of experience “speaking” to one – of one's receiving the “testimony of the senses.” But if this speech is merely a matter of one's being disposed to believe the relevant proposition, it is not testimony from experience but from oneself. It is a case of what Travis (2004) calls *autorepresentation* rather than *allorepresentation*.

on spontaneity, to put it in McDowell's (1993) language. In the absence of these constraints, one would have to concede that *experience* itself is not epistemically significant, except as a trigger for the dispositions to have beliefs/seemings; anything else could be such a trigger (e.g., a subpersonal state). To demote the role of experience in this way is to give up liberal dogmatism. Liberal dogmatism is an experientialist view.

The liberal, I conclude, ought to regard the mix-up case as a case of a justified simple visual belief in which the subject has a mediate justification from a looks-related reason but lacks an immediate justification. So, having a justified simple visual belief that a thing is F doesn't *require* having an immediate justification from experience that it is F. Sometimes it comes entirely from a mediate looks-related justification.

Might there nevertheless be *many* cases, e.g., normal ones without mix-ups, in which one has both justifications? To answer affirmatively, we need reason to think that postulating immediate justification is necessary to account for the epistemic facts. If the postulation of such justification wouldn't account for anything not already accounted for by the justification coming from looks-related reasons, its postulation is unwarranted.

How can the liberal dogmatist show that immediate justification from experience earns its keep? The most promising place to look, here again, is to the epistemic facts about doxastic justification of simple visual beliefs. If there are cases that show that relying on looks-related reasons wouldn't explain the full extent of our doxastic justification, this might be a good reason to postulate immediate justifications.

Consider the following pair of cases. Case 1: you have a normal simple visual belief that a thing is an oboe, while enjoying standard oboe-ish experiences – that is, experiences whose contents involve appropriate oboe-ish shape-color-gestalts. Case 2: you are in the oboe/clarinet mix-up case and are looking at a clarinet but believe it is an oboe. If your belief is more justified in Case 1 than in Case 2, this might seem best explained by claiming that your experience provides immediate justification in Case 1 but not in Case 2.

Is your belief more reasonable in one case than another? I cannot see that it is. And even if you think the belief is more reasonable – more doxastically justified – in Case 1 than in Case 2, before you conclude that we must posit immediate justification to explain the difference, you would need to rule out the possibility that the belief that *this looks like an oboe* is more doxastically justified in Case 1 than in Case 2. This difference could explain a difference in the doxastic justification of the target beliefs in the cases.

Finally, consider the following *direct* argument that in no cases of justified simple visual beliefs is the belief justified immediately.³⁰ Take your favorite paradigm case of an immediately

³⁰ A similar argument is developed in much more detail and applied to the issue of immediate knowledge in my "Knowledge What Things Look Like."

justified simple visual belief that a thing is F. If we can show that the justified simple visual belief in this paradigm case isn't immediately justified, we can reasonably conclude the case is representative, i.e., that no such beliefs are immediately justified. Here is the basic argument, applied to the apple case.

As argued above, you have a justification from looks-related reasons to believe the thing is an apple. An essential element in this justification is the reason *apples have that look*. Assume that you have in addition to this looks-related reason an immediate justification (from experience) to believe the thing is an apple. Now, consider a counterfactual. Suppose you lacked even prima facie justification to believe apples have this look. You would no longer have your justification from looks-related reasons. Would you still have the immediate justification? You ought to, since it is a distinct line of justification. However, if you lacked prima facie justification to believe apples have this look, you *wouldn't* be justified in believing the thing is an apple and so you wouldn't have the immediate justification – even prima facie – from experience. Thus, our assumption is false: in this paradigm case you don't have an immediate justification from experience to believe the thing is an apple.

I cannot explore the various possible replies to this argument here. Let me note its force: if you weren't justified in believing apples have *that* look then intuitively you wouldn't have any idea the thing was an apple, at least without special collateral information which we can assume absent. But if you have immediate justification, you ought to still have it if you lacked justification to believe apples have the look in question.

I have argued three points in this section. First, and the least ambitiously, I have argued that there are cases of justified simple visual beliefs that aren't immediately justified. These are cases of mediate justification from looks-related reasons without immediate justification. If this argument is sound, positing immediate justification cannot explain the justification of all justified simple visual beliefs. Second, I have argued that we have no good reason to postulate immediate justification in addition to the looks-based reasons to explain the epistemic facts about normal cases. Third, and most ambitiously, I have sketched an argument that simple visual beliefs are never immediately justified. Even part from the third, the first two ought to make us doubtful of the need for positing immediate justification for justified simple visual beliefs.

5. The justification of beliefs about looks

Does the looks view take us to the heart of the epistemological issues about perception? When simple visual beliefs are justified they are justified by virtue of our possession of reasons concerning the looks of things. But this only pushes back the problem. One set of visual beliefs is justified by another. Now we have to ask: how do we get to be justified in believing propositions about things' looks?

One way of understanding how reasons concerning looks enter the picture is for them to be justified by reasons concerning one's own experiences. Reasons concerning looks, on this view, would merely be epistemological go-betweens. In the end, the looks view would be embedded within classical foundationalism.

Consider these propositions, about the apple:

(1) it looks green

(2) it looks green to me right now.

Could the same sort of argument I've given in previous sections be used to show in cases like the apple case that we have a justification to believe (1) based on having a justification to believe (2)?³¹

It seems implausible that my justification for the likes of (1) always comes from a justification to believe (2). Consider my belief about the apple that it is green. It seems my reasons, the ones I rely on, are solely about the apple, not about me, even at one further inferential remove.³² These "seemings" are no serious argument, admittedly. More is needed. Below my goals will be limited. I will offer the beginnings of an account of how one could be justified in (1) but not in virtue of having a reason of the form (2).

A familiar view from the philosophy mind is that visual experiences attribute viewpoint-relative properties.³³ As you walk around a table, the way the table looks to you is constantly

³¹ One common use of sentences like (2) is to indicate something about how you do or are inclined to classify a thing's looks with respect to color. Used this way, you could express your thought more clearly as follows: "in my assessment, the way the apple looks is green." If you were later shown that your classification was incorrect (e.g., say, because a moment before you had been staring at a bright red expanse), what you expressed with (2) would still be true, even though your classification of the way the apple looked was wrong. This is more common in the case of non-basic colors. A remark "the square looks vermilion to me" might be one that someone wouldn't retract even after being shown that he was visually mixing up vermilion with puce. He might reaffirm his statement, explaining that he was only saying that, in his assessment at the time, the look of the thing was vermilion.

When (2) is used to state "in my assessment, the way it looks is green," I think it is fairly clear that (2) is not being used to state something that would be a person's reason to believe a thing looks green (i.e., 1).

³² What about the considerations from dialectics, explanations of errors, and unclear cases? Do these show that we *do* rely beliefs about our experiences as reasons for propositions about how things look? I find these considerations less clear-cut here. When a belief about a color is disputed, do we naturally turn to the examination of considerations about how it looks to each of us at the current time, and so to a fact about our experience? When we explain errors, do we do this? Perhaps. But often I think our turning to facts about experience is part of an effort to explain our judgment rather than to cite a reason we had. Consider a variant of the contact lens case. Suppose one mistakes puce for vermilion and has a puce spot on one's contact lens. I believe the object seen is vermilion. I think the best explanation of the false belief that the object was vermilion is this: I thought it looked vermilion; it in fact looked puce to me, but I was wrong about what puce looks like, mistaking it for vermilion. We don't need to amplify this as follows: I thought it looked vermilion because I thought it looked vermilion to me, even though it really looked puce to me, because I was mistaken about what puce and vermilion look like. Finally, in unclear cases, we don't usually turn to facts about experiences to settle disputes about an object's looks. We do say "it looks to me like a hairy woodpecker," but this is the "in my assessment" use (see the previous footnote).

³³ See Huemer (2000), Noë (2005), Tye (2000), Schellenberg (2008), and Hill (2011, 2014)

changing. If visual experience attributes only viewpoint-independent properties, what would account for the change? The shape, color, texture, and other viewpoint-independent properties of the table don't look to one to change as one walks around the table. Whatever properties capture changes in how things look to you must include viewpoint-relative properties, ones that are instantiated only relative to a viewpoint.

There is considerable room for debate about just what these properties fit to be contents of experience *are*. Are they clusters of viewpoint-independent properties together with purely viewpoint-relative ones such as distance, orientation, and depth? Or are they better understood as not including any viewpoint-independent properties but rather viewpoint-relative "cues" to such properties? On the latter alternative, experience attributes properties that are shared by distant things that look distant and non-distant things that look distant, by red things that look red and non-red things that look red. It attributes, in effect, these "cues" to size, shape, color, depth, distance, motion, etc., much discussed in the psychology of perception.

Note that these viewpoint-relative cues are excellent candidates for the looks of objects. As I mentioned, distant-looking things, whether distant or not, have these properties, and red-looking things, whether red or not, share them. Because they are good candidates for looks, if the best theory of the content of visual experience takes experience to attribute them to objects or scenes, then we have the makings of a good account of how we come to be justified in believing propositions about looks. One's experience represents an object as having a certain look. At this point, an epistemologist would need to explain how justification to believe the relevant look is present could be a source of justification to think the thing looks F. One option is to appeal to a justification to believe a generic linking the look to the relevant feature F, e.g., justification to believe the look is a look of Fs. Alternatively, one might appeal to an entitlement, not grounded in justification to believe any proposition, to transition from the registration of a look to the formation of a belief that the thing looks F. I will not attempt to decide between the two.

In giving either of these stories we embrace a core dogmatist idea: one's experience presents a thing as being a certain way (in this case as having a certain look), and this gives one *prima facie* immediate justification to believe it is that way (has that look). But looks— as viewpoint-relative cues— are not included in the standard range of sensible qualities, which are viewpoint-independent. Thus, this is not moderate dogmatism.

What the possibility of such an account of the justification of beliefs about looks shows is that the looks view doesn't imply classical foundationalism, that it is possible in principle for it to be true though classical foundationalism is false. It is a proof of possibility. A full case for this account of the justification of beliefs about looks must await another occasion.

Conclusion

I have argued for the looks view: when simple visual beliefs about objects are justified, they are justified in virtue of being based on reasons we have concerning objects' looks. This view allows us to explain how simple visual beliefs, when justified, are justified by the having of reasons which are essentially public – the reasons are not about us about our experiences but about how the object is, and they are reasons that others can and do have just as much as ourselves do. We saw that the looks view is compatible with liberal dogmatism. However, I raised doubts about the postulation of a separate stream of immediate justification in addition to the mediate justification coming from looks-related reasons.

We also noted that the looks view is compatible with classical foundationalism. However, in the final section of the paper, I sketched a proposal for how our justification to believe propositions about looks, e.g., that a thing looks green, might not derive at all from justifications to believe propositions about our experiences – about how things look to us right now. This proposal shows that the looks view is also compatible with the rejection of classical foundationalism. Whether in fact the looks view, in enabling us to avoid the Scylla of dogmatism (and its neglect of reasons in perception), also enables us to avoid the Charybdis of classical foundationalism is a question I leave to another occasion.

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