

# Direct Realism, Introspection, and Cognitive Science<sup>1</sup>

Direct Realism has made a remarkable comeback in recent years. But it has morphed into views many of which strike me as importantly similar to traditional versions of indirect realism. I used to think that one can unproblematically distinguish versions of Epistemological Direct Realism from versions of Metaphysical Direct Realism, and there is certainly a sense in which this is true. I now think, however, that it is only against a set of epistemological presuppositions that certain metaphysical views should be characterized as versions of direct as opposed to indirect realism. I will argue that the plausibility of the most interesting version of *metaphysical* direct realism is held hostage to familiar hypotheses about cognitive psychology and plausible facts about introspection.

## *Epistemological Direct Realism:*

Let's define epistemological direct realism as the view that we have noninferentially justified beliefs in at least some contingent propositions describing the external physical world. I add the adjective "external" here so as to leave open the question of whether sensations and other mental phenomena are themselves physical. I take it that an indirect realist can consistently maintain both that all knowledge of external physical reality must be inferred from knowledge of subjective sensations and also conclude that subjective sensations are, for example, brain states. It's a bit awkward, however, to use the cumbersome expression "external physical reality" and so for ease of exposition I shall often omit the adjective "external." I shall say that a proposition describes the physical world only if its truth entails a proposition which attributes to some object those properties in virtue of which the thing is physical. So, for example, I might be able to know that the F exists, where the F is, in fact, a physical object. But if the proposition that the F exists does not entail that the F is physical, the proposition that the F exists is not, in this sense, a proposition describing the physical world.<sup>2</sup> Berkeley, for example, sometimes posed as an epistemological direct realist when he claimed both that we can know unproblematically that certain ideas exist and that a physical object is nothing but a bundle of ideas. But when he was being careful he made clear that the ideas we know directly are never by themselves constitutive of a physical object—at best they are logical "parts" of objects. On his more sophisticated view, knowledge that a

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered at the 2005 Rutgers Epistemology Conference. I would like to thank the participants in that conference for questions and criticisms that helped me think more carefully about some of these issues. I would particularly like to thank Fred Dretske and Gilbert Harman. I also profited enormously from many discussions with my colleague James John

<sup>2</sup> So, for example, some sense-data theorists thought that physical objects are constituted by sense data standing in certain relations to one another, but that some sense data—the sense data we are aware of in hallucination, for example—are "wild". They don't fit together with other sense data to make up a physical object. On such a view, one might be able to know that there is a given sense before one. That sense datum may be physical (in virtue of being a constituent of a physical object). But one might not know that the sense datum is physical because one doesn't know that it bears appropriate relations to other sense data. Berkeley was probably committed to a view like this.

given physical object exists would always require inference—complex inference at that. Berkeley was no epistemological direct realist.

A belief is noninferentially justified when its justification is not constituted, even in part, by the having of other justified beliefs. The best candidates for noninferentially justified beliefs about the physical world are, presumably, beliefs about “bread-box-sized” objects perceived under optimum conditions. And the direct realist would probably be well-advised to further restrict the contents of such beliefs to those involving the application of relatively simple concepts such as color and shape.

Arguments from illusion and perceptual relativity were once thought by most classical foundationalists to doom epistemological direct realism. If, for example, we thought that to be noninferentially justified in believing P we must be directly acquainted with the fact that P (the truth maker for our belief), we would be hard-pressed to accommodate the view that even the best perceptual situation allows us to form noninferentially justified belief in propositions describing our physical environment. The following argument is familiar and controversial, but still powerful:

- 1) No matter how strong our justification is for believing some proposition describing our immediate physical environment, we could possess precisely the same sort of justification for believing that proposition while vividly hallucinating (while being deceived by a demon, living in the *Matrix* world, etc.).
- 2) The justification we would have were we hallucinating is clearly not noninferential—noninferential justification would require something like our direct acquaintance with some fact about our external environment that is the truth maker for our belief and by hypothesis, there is no such fact.

Therefore,

- 3) The justification we have when we are veridically perceiving our physical environment is not noninferential either.

Given the rise of externalist views about both the content of experience and the nature of justification, the classical argument against epistemological direct realism is now hardly unproblematic. Many argue that experience is representational in character and that the objects represented are at least partly a function of the causal history of the internal states of the perceiver. On Putnam/Burge/Dretske/Davidson views about the nature of mental representation, it is not clear that we can even make sense of a world in which there is *no* veridical experience (though most content externalists are always still *committed* to the view that any *particular* experience can be hallucinatory and even that any *particular* perceiver can be the victim of massive, life-long hallucination).

In epistemology, both causal theorists and reliabilists have fairly straightforward, albeit quite different, responses to the argument from the possibility of hallucination. A crude causal theorist might claim that one has noninferential justification for believing P when the belief that P is caused by the fact that P without any justified beliefs serving as

mediate links in the causal chain (for ease of exposition I'll call this causation direct<sup>3</sup>). So one has noninferential justification for believing that one is in pain if the fact that one is in pain directly causes the belief that one is in pain. And one has noninferential justification for believing that there is a table before one now if the fact of the table's existence causes directly the belief that the table exists. If a causal theory of justification were true (it's not) then one could straightforwardly reject premise 1) of the argument from the possibility of hallucination. An experience E1 can be phenomenologically indistinguishable from an experience E2, while E1 was caused by the fact that that P and E2 was caused by some fact other than P. If E1, in turn, causes S to believe that P, the existence of that causal chain constitutes, on the view, a kind of noninferential justification for S to believe P. Even if E2 also causes the belief that P, the fact that E2 has the "wrong" causal history precludes the resulting belief from being noninferentially justified.<sup>4</sup>

The reliabilist, by contrast, is in a position to accept 1), but reject 2). For the reliabilist, noninferential justification has nothing to do with *infallible* justification and, as a result, there is no motive to incorporate the truth makers for a noninferentially justified belief into the conditions that constitute that noninferential justification.<sup>5</sup> On a crude reliabilism, a belief is noninferentially justified when it results from what Goldman (1979) used to call an unconditionally reliable belief-independent process—a process that takes as its input something other than a belief state.<sup>6</sup> On such a view, there can be noninferentially justified beliefs that are just barely more likely to be true than false. Reliabilists, of course, have a great deal of work to do even explaining clearly their criteria for justification. One of the most severe problems the reliabilist faces is the generality problem.<sup>7</sup> We need from the reliabilist a clear account of how to individuate the processes whose reliability is at issue in generating justification. There are two quite different problems—one more serious than the other. There is the problem of the degree of specificity one should use in characterizing the input and output of the causal mechanism that results in belief. *That* problem may be an empirical problem if one adopts a generality theory of causation. Strictly speaking, on a generality theory, an individual or event causes another only in virtue of its possessing certain properties. As soon as we have reference to properties, we have a solution to the degree of generality with which we should be specifying inputs and outputs.

But even if we have correctly identified the causal properties that are involved in the operation of the process, we will still need to know how far back we should go in the causal chain. Furthermore, we will almost certainly want to define reliability relative to

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<sup>3</sup> It's being direct in this sense is compatible with there being intermediate links in the causal chain—the idea is only that those intermediate links do not include cognitive states.

<sup>4</sup> A Nozick-style "tracking" theorist could easily introduce a tracking conception of noninferential knowledge and use a similar argument to reject premise 1) of the argument from the possibility of hallucination.

<sup>5</sup> Notice that despite their enormous differences the old acquaintance theorist and the causal theorist share a common commitment to building truth makers into the very conditions that constitute the possession of noninferential justification.

<sup>6</sup> This isn't quite right. We want to allow for a noninferentially justified belief that we have a certain belief. The process resulting in the metabelief might take as its input a belief but it is still unconditionally reliable.

<sup>7</sup> One of the clearest and most influential statements of the problem is given by Feldman and Conee (1998).

an environment.<sup>8</sup> And that environment can be specified broadly or narrowly--the reliability of visually formed beliefs is quite different relative to an environment in which there are many distorting factors (like Hollywood producers busily erecting fake barns).

The upshot of all this is that it is not clear at the outset whether the reliabilist will take the belief-forming processes in the veridical and the nonveridical cases to be the same or different (for the purposes of assessing their reliability relevant to justification). But let us suppose that a decision is made to count the belief-forming processes as the same. We take the input to be something like sensation subjectively understood, and we take the relevant environment to include the circumstances surrounding both veridical and nonveridical perceivings. Let's suppose further that the processes in both veridical and nonveridical cases are belief-independent.<sup>9</sup> Provided that hallucination is relatively rare, the belief-forming process can be both belief-independent and unconditionally reliable—just the right sort of process to generate noninferentially justified beliefs. Whether or not one happens to be in the veridical situation rather than its hallucinatory counterpart, one will have noninferentially justified beliefs about one's physical environment.

One needn't embrace epistemological externalism to be an epistemological direct realist. Chisholm (1989), Huemer (2001), and others, take the mere occurrence of certain sensory and intentional states, understood as internal states, to confer positive epistemic status on certain propositions describing our physical environment.<sup>10</sup> I won't discuss such views here. Brewer (1999), however, is best understood as someone who wants to construe certain belief states as constituted in part by physical objects with which we are directly acquainted in perception. Their shared presence in both perception and belief states constitutes a kind of noninferential justification. So Brewer tries to tie a version of metaphysical direct realism to epistemological direct realism and I think that the plausibility of his view will stand or fall on the plausibility of a version of metaphysical direct realism that I will discuss below. For now, I want to emphasize only that there is an intimate connection between the plausibility of epistemological direct realism and the plausibility of certain paradigmatic externalist accounts of noninferential justification. I don't think such accounts have much plausibility. I think noninferential justification really does require direct acquaintance with truth makers and for reasons I indicate below I don't think that one can have that sort of acquaintance with external reality. As a result, I don't think that epistemological direct realism is a plausible view.

### *Metaphysical Direct Realism:*

Metaphysical direct realism is a view that is much harder to define than is epistemological direct realism. It is probably most natural to construe the view as one that concerns the nature of our relation to physical objects in perception (not perceiving *that*, or perceiving *as*, but perceiving *per se*). One of the primary difficulties, however, is that participants in the debate may well not agree on the wisdom of employing, or

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<sup>8</sup> Sosa attempts to solve this problem in a variety of papers collected in Sosa (1991).

<sup>9</sup> I have argued elsewhere (1998) that this assumption is highly dubious.

<sup>10</sup> Conee (2004), 18-20, also flirts with such a view. These sorts of views all bear at least a family resemblance to epistemic conservatism a view criticized effectively by Foley (1980),

sometimes even the *intelligibility* of employing, certain categories of relations in terms of which their opponents propose to frame the debate. So consider the following version of metaphysical direct realism that frames the debate focusing on the relation of perception itself.

Metaphysical Direct Realism (*MDRI*):

*In at least some perceptual situations, we perceive (see, hear, feel, smell, taste) physical objects and that perception does not involve as a constituent the perception of something other than a physical object.*

As many have pointed out, it is not clear that this version of metaphysical direct realism captures an interesting thesis—one that would be disputed by most self-proclaimed indirect realists. To be sure, many of the British empiricists embraced sense data (by some name or other—usually “ideas”) and adopted the unfortunate habit of referring to our relation to such sense data as perception. So some indirect realists, for example, talked about perceiving physical objects through perceiving mind-dependent sense data that represent in some fashion those objects. But it seems pretty clear that the perceptual verbs they used to describe our relation to sense data were used with a quite different *meaning* than were those verbs when used to describe our relation to physical objects. And to avoid confusion, a *careful* sense datum theorist would surely employ some other terminology to refer to our relation to sense data. Some twentieth century sense-data theorists would be more likely to talk of being directly aware of, or directly acquainted with sense data. On their view, our direct awareness of sense data is a constituent of our perceiving any aspect of a physical object. So, for example, the famous causal theory of perception, when coupled with a sense datum theory, offers the following account of veridical perception.

*S veridically perceives object X when X causes (in the right way<sup>11</sup>) a sense datum Y of which S is directly aware.*

On the causal theory of perception it doesn't even make sense to suppose that we *perceive* sense data—at least it doesn't make sense unless we are prepared to claim that when you perceive a sense datum that sense datum causes yet another sense datum which causes yet another sense datum ... and so on *ad infinitum*.

So the heart of indirect realism doesn't seem to be captured by the thesis that we perceive physical objects without *perceiving* something other than a physical object. It is tempting, instead, to turn again to that relation of awareness or acquaintance that played such a central role for many classical foundationalists in the debate over whether one can know without inference truths about the physical world. Thus we could formulate metaphysical direct realism in the following way:

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<sup>11</sup> Causal theories of perception and just about everything else always face counterexamples involving “deviant” causal chains. If I'm the mad neurophysiologist stimulating your brain in a vat so as to produce the visual experience of seeming to see a tree and I'm inspired by the tree I actually see before me now, would it be correct to say of you that you see that very tree?

*MDR2:*

*In at least some perceptual situations, we perceive a physical object and that perception does not involve as a constituent direct awareness of anything other than a physical object.*

Unfortunately, direct acquaintance or awareness is one of those relations warmly embraced by some but dismissively rejected as unintelligible by others. But even if one were to accept the philosophical respectability of direct acquaintance, it is not clear that MDR2 really gets at the heart of the classical dispute between direct and indirect realists. For one thing it is rather liberal in what it includes as MDR. Consider, for example, a sense-datum theorist who holds that sense data are mind-dependent, but who allows that it makes perfectly good sense to suppose that we are sometimes unaware of our own sense data (perhaps sense data occupying some peripheral region of our visual field). Suppose also that this philosopher sticks with a version of the causal theory of perception, this time without the presupposition that the sense data constitutive of perception are necessarily sense data of which one is aware. So this philosopher claims:

*S veridically sees X when X causes (in the right way) a visual sense datum in S's visual field.*

Or consider the adverbial theorist who rejects sense data in favor of ways of being appeared to, but allows that one can be appeared to in a certain way without one's being aware of the fact that one is so appeared to. That adverbial theorist might also endorse a causal theory of perception:

*S veridically sees X when X causes (in the right way) S's being appeared to (visually) in a certain way.*

Or lastly suppose that one takes sensation to be essentially intentional or representational in character. A visual sensation, for example, is a species of intentional state, and like belief, desire, fear and other intentional states represents some feature of the world to which it corresponds (in the case of veridical perception) or fails to correspond (in the case of nonveridical perception). So on this view, S veridically perceives X when X induces in S an intentional state that accurately represents X's existence (where there is no requirement that S be aware of the occurrence of the representational state—it is enough that it occurs and is caused in the right way). Since on the intentionalist view it is doubtful that one can perceive an object simpliciter (as opposed to perceiving some feature F of an object) one might prefer to state the view as follows:

*S veridically perceives the F'ness of X when X's being F causes in S a sensation that represents the state of affairs of X's being F.*

All of the above accounts of perception leave open the possibility of perceiving a physical object when one is not (non-perceptually) aware of anything else, and thus,

given *MDR2*, they all qualify as versions of metaphysical direct realism. Yet in obvious respects there are *versions* of the above views that are more like classical versions of indirect realism than they are like classical versions of direct realism. In particular, it seems to me that one is likely to classify each of the above views as a version of indirect realism *if* one thinks that one *could* become aware of the subjective constituent of veridical perception in a way in which one could not become aware of the existence of the physical object.

If we want to tighten our criteria for a theory of perception being a version of direct realism, we can do so in one of two ways. Instead of the negative characterizations offered above—perception is direct when it does not involve awareness of something other than a physical object—we might require that the direct realist make a positive commitment to there being direct awareness of the physical.

*MDR3:*

*It at least some perceptual situations we are directly aware of physical objects or their constituents—the awareness is direct when it is unmediated by awareness of anything other than something physical.*

Alternatively, we might focus on another distinction—the distinction between compositional and non-compositional views of perception and couple that with reference to the *possibility* of awareness of compositional elements:

*MDR4:*

*In at least some perceptual situations, the act of perceiving does not contain both a “subjective” and an “objective” constituent in such a way that the perceiver could become directly aware of the subjective constituent in a way in which he could not become directly aware of the objective constituent.*

For our purposes we can view a subjective component as one whose presence does not entail the existence of anything external and physical. To add a bit more “meat” to the requirements for direct realism, we might add further conditions that the subjective component must meet. Every perceptual act surely involves the existence of the perceiver, but even if one supposes that one can become directly aware of one’s own existence in a way in which one cannot become directly aware of the existence of anything physical, that hardly seems to preclude one’s holding an interesting version of metaphysical direct realism. So the subjective constituent referred to in *MDR4* is best construed as something that *varies* from perceptual act to perceptual act.

On certain classical versions of the sense-datum theory and the appearing theory, *MDR4* allows one to reject direct realism while respecting what some take to be a datum of the phenomenology of perception. It has often been observed that in perception it is wildly implausible to suppose (as some classical versions of indirect realism have) that one is always phenomenologically aware of the subjective character of experience (whether understood as sense data, ways of being appeared to, or representational states). Indeed, it requires a great deal of effort, it is argued, to turn one’s attention inward. To be

sure, as one learns to paint, for example, one can eventually learn how to pay attention to the many and subtle ways in which appearance shifts as reality stays the same. But it's not easy to develop this capacity—in any event it's hardly the case that we typically notice all the subtle changes in the apparent color of physical objects, for example, as the sun moves across the sky. Nevertheless, *MDR4* allows the indirect realist to claim that one *can* become directly aware of the character of subjective experience in a way in which cannot, even in principle, become directly aware of physical reality.

*Direct Awareness:*

We were trying to distinguish epistemological and ontological versions of direct realism. But *MDR2* through *MDR4* all drag in the problematic notion of direct awareness, a notion that looks suspiciously like an epistemic concept. Certainly the expression “aware of” is often used as a synonym for knows that. When I say that I am aware of the fact that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1066 that's presumably just another way of indicating that I know that the battle took place on that date. If “is aware that” sometimes means “knows that,” then “is *directly* aware that” should probably be construed as meaning, at least sometimes, “knows *directly* (without inference) that.” And this is, indeed, one way to interpret *MDR3* and *4*. But then *MDR3* might seem to collapse into epistemological direct realism, and *MDR4* might seem to be a view that denies that there is a proposition describing subjective components of perception that can be known directly in ways that truths about the objective components cannot be known. There is still, however, the *de re/de dicto* ambiguity. I might be able to know without inference that the F exists where the F is a physical object or a constituent of a physical object, but not know that the F is a physical object or a constituent of a physical object. The epistemological direct realism I defined earlier requires that we sometimes be able to know noninferentially some propositions whose truth entails that there exists something physical. Even with an understanding of “aware that” as “knows that” *MDR3* and *4*, then, *can* be understood in such a way that they are compatible with the denial of epistemological direct realism.

Elsewhere, I have defended the view that direct awareness is not by itself a species of knowledge.<sup>12</sup> Rather, it is a partial *source* of knowledge and justification. I argued that direct awareness is a sui generis relation between a subject and a particular (perhaps), property (more plausibly) or fact (more controversially). When one is directly acquainted with, say, one's pain as one entertains the thought that one is in pain and one is directly acquainted with the correspondence between the thought and the pain, one has noninferential justification for believing that one is in pain. And when one bases one's belief on that justification, one's belief is justified. It is a bit of an understatement to suggest that such a view is no longer popular. Still, most everyone will allow that there is some sense to be attached to the notion of introspective knowledge. A reliabilist, for example, might construe my introspective knowledge of my pain as a belief that I am in pain produced by a belief-independent reliable process whose input is the pain itself.

Any view, however, that seeks to identify introspection with mere belief (however produced) strikes me as phenomenologically inadequate. There is a world of difference between mere belief that one is in a mental state and having the state itself “there” before

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<sup>12</sup> Fumerton (1995, Chapter 3)



consciousness. One can imagine a person, for example, who is convinced that there are pains of which one is not conscious and, further, that he is in such a state of pain at the moment. However strong that belief is, it seems to me obvious that it is not anything like consciousness of pain. The latter involves the pain itself as a constituent. One could, of course, claim that introspection is not mere belief, but is, rather, *de re* belief, a belief that has as a constituent the pain which is its subject matter. While such a view is plausible, it implicitly relies, I think on the very idea of direct awareness, for it is in virtue of our direct awareness of the pain that it becomes a candidate for inclusion as a constituent of a *de re* belief. Still, I'm not going to convince you with these cryptic remarks that one should embrace the concept of direct acquaintance and it is probably best, therefore, that we carry on our discussion of direct realism by looking separately at its prospects given alternative views of introspection.

Let's begin though with the traditional idea that direct awareness is a sui generis real (as opposed to intentional) relation that holds between a subject and the object of awareness. According to *MDR3* one sometimes stands in that relation to something both external and physical. But is such a view even prima facie credible given what most take to be the way physical processes produce perception? Setting aside skeptical concerns it seems obvious that perception results from a long and complex causal chain whose early links involve properties of the object perceived but whose late links involve changes in the brain. If one interrupts the causal chain before the critical changes take place in the brain there is no perception. Let's call the critical last physical link in the causal chain, the brain state, X. On the classical view, X either is or directly causes a sensation, the kind of thing that can occur whether or not the relevant physical object exists. Indeed, the intelligibility of all sorts of familiar science fiction relies on the idea that one can produce the kind of sensation we associate with seeing a brown table, for example, by stimulating the relevant region of the brain. If one adds to all this the hypotheses that we can become directly aware of the resulting sensation whether or not the external object we take to be its cause exists, and that we cannot have such direct awareness of the external object, we have, according to *MDR3* and *MDR4* accepted indirect realism.

To accept direct realism within the framework presupposed by this sketch of the physical process involved in perception, it seems to me that one would have to embrace the idea that at least sometimes the penultimate brain state operates so as to "open" consciousness to external reality. The metaphor of opening a window shade to reveal the scene outside is helpful. One could suppose that in veridical perception the relevant changes in the brain simply open the shades to reveal what is there before the perceiver. But the metaphor is in the end devastating to the direct realist who wants to identify the phenomenal reality, the character of the reality that is given to one in experience, with features of external reality. The opening of a window shade does not causally determine the scene revealed. What one sees through a window depends on what is there outside the window. Change the environment and you see something different. But I take it that the changes that take place in the brain, however produced, causally determine the phenomenological scenery, so to speak. That's precisely why we would expect to get introspectively indistinguishable experiences through the ordinary sorts of causal chains that begin with external objects and the more exotic causal chains involving *Matrix*-like computers or mad scientists stimulating the relevant regions of the brain. If the experience produced by the brain state really involved a direct relation between the

subject and properties exemplified by a physical object, we would need to endorse the absurd hypothesis that by stimulating a region of the brain we could bring about the existence of a physical object exemplifying certain properties. Were this indeed possible, it would no doubt create fascinating new possibilities for profitable new industries. I wouldn't suggest, however, investing in pilot programs.

One could, of course, try to save direct realism defined with a traditional understanding of direct awareness, by embracing some version of disjunctivism. One could claim that in veridical perception the window shade metaphor applies as a way of understanding the role played by the brain, while in nonveridical experience one simply has to understand what takes place differently. I'm not much interested in the empirical study of perception, but it seems to me that the disjunctivist is in serious difficulty *if* it turns out that in both veridical and hallucinatory experience, the immediate cause of the phenomenologically given character of the experience is the same. The principle: same (complete) cause, same effect, is enormously plausible. Indeed on many views of causation, it is analytic.

All of the above might be of little interest to most contemporary direct realists. As I have noted, many will reject the traditional notion of direct awareness as unintelligible and will consequently be uninterested in the prospects for a direct realism defined in terms of that concept.<sup>13</sup> But however one understands the kind of direct knowledge involved in introspection, one will still need to deal with the empirical fact that perception involves a causal chain, the last links of which are internal states of the perceiver—brain states or the mental states that are the immediate effects of brain states. And one will still need to address both the epistemic nature of our potential access to these states and the way in which that access is similar to, or different from, our access to the external objects which are usually presumed to be the remote causes of these internal states. To be sure, the externalist will take the representational significance of an internal state to be a function of extraordinarily complex nomological facts—not just, or even at all, the causal origin of this token of the internal state kind, but more importantly evolutionary facts about how kinds of internal states came to play causal roles in the survival of the organism that occupies these states. To *veridically* perceive X on such a view is to be in an internal state R that represents X or some feature of X where that feature of X is causally responsible for the occurrence of R. That R *represents* X is itself a complex state of affairs defined by other complex causal factors including (probably) the way in which causal connections between features like X and states like R and behavior of various sorts contributed to the survival of the organism. While it is a matter of enormous controversy, I think that the externalist with a view like this is committed to the position that to know that a given internal state serves the function of representing external reality is to know an extraordinarily complicated truth of a sort that can't possibly be known directly or introspectively.<sup>14</sup> So I think that the externalist renders the truth that a given sensation is a sensation of blue something beyond the scope of introspective knowledge. As I said, that is, of course, a controversial claim. Burge (1988, 1996), Davidson (1987), Dretske (1995), and others, for example, seem to think

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<sup>13</sup> As I noted earlier, Brewer (1999) is an exception.

<sup>14</sup> See Fumerton (2003). The controversy over whether one can reconcile externalism with the introspective access we have to intentional states is discussed in a number of papers contained in Ludlow and Martin (1998).

that externalism is compatible with unproblematic introspective knowledge of intentional states and their content, including, of course, sensation. I can't argue that point here. If I'm right, however, there still remains the question of whether the externalist should allow that there is *something* that can be introspectively known even if it isn't the complex truth describing the representational status of an internal state. There are, it seems to me, no persuasive arguments that would lead us to conclude that swamp men or brains in a vat would be incapable of introspective and direct knowledge of the phenomenological character of their internal states. To be sure, the externalist may be committed to the view that these internal states don't represent what they do for us, but if the externalist infers from this that there is nothing of which we could be aware were we in such states, the externalist has inferred a conclusion that I think should be a *reductio* of the position.

But even if we focus on experience that the externalist concedes is representation, but which fails to veridically represent in the context of hallucination, it seems to me that we can surely still find an introspectively accessible state that is common to both veridical and nonveridical experience. I hallucinate a brown object and am introspectively aware of the character of my experience. Dretske (1995) and Harman (1990) suggest that introspection has essentially the same representational content as does the sensation introspected. There remains, of course, the thorny problem of how introspection distinguishes among different kinds of representation (sensation, fear, desire, etc.) with the same content. But set that problem aside for now. Since the perception is nonveridical that content isn't the very external object represented, nor is it, presumably, properties exemplified by an external object—there is no object of the relevant sort. It's hard to imagine that many contemporary representationalists, almost always self-proclaimed naturalists, are willing to posit a world of Meinongian entities that subsist without existence in order to serve as the content of nonveridical perception.

The official view, of course, is that the unexemplified properties that are the shared "content" of both the sensation and the introspective state are properties that are not present before the subject who is the victim of the hallucination. They may not even be properties that have *ever* been veridically perceived by the subject in question. They need only be properties that have played a certain kind of causal role in the development of certain kinds of creatures—a causal role that defines their function. But that leaves open the question of what content *is* "before" the subject in both nonveridical sensing and the introspection that is supposed to share the same content. While I would think it is still a bit of an embarrassment for a naturalist, it's hard to see how one can get by at this point without positing something like the profiles of unexemplified properties suggested by Johnston (2002). Profiles of unexemplified properties are presumably not *sets* of properties. The properties have to "hang together" in the way that we find such properties connected when they are exemplified. But that is just to say what they are *not*. I'm not sure I have any positive idea of what these profiles of unexemplified properties are supposed to *be*—sense data are looking pretty good by comparison. But whatever having a property before mind is supposed to be, it seems to me that we are going to end up with a common element to both veridical and nonveridical experience, an element to which we have a distinctive introspective access—a kind of access that is different from our access to the physical reality which in veridical perception is playing a causal role in the production of the relevant internal state.

I conceded in my discussion of epistemic direct realism, that epistemic externalism allows the possibility of direct knowledge of truths about the external physical world. Epistemic externalism allows the *possibility* of direct knowledge of just about anything. But once one concedes that one can have *introspective* knowledge of a state that is common to both veridical and nonveridical experience, a kind of knowledge that one can't have of external physical reality, we have a view that bears a marked resemblance to the indirect realism of an earlier time.

Of course, one might wonder whether all this isn't just terminological. Why would it be particularly interesting if perception involved always involved a subjective component that can be known in a way in which physical reality cannot be known. The tradition took this to be important precisely because they thought that such an admission is the first step on the road to admitting that our knowledge of external reality is *problematic* in a way in which our knowledge of this supposed subjective component of experience is not. But as we just reminded ourselves, the right sort of naturalistic/externalist epistemology can claim that the view I am calling ontological indirect realism is perfectly compatible with our knowledge of physical reality being direct/noninferential. To be sure, we can't *introspect* the existence of physical objects in the way in which one can introspect the common element of both veridical and hallucinatory experience, but that is true only because we reserve the term "introspection" for a *species* of direct knowledge. Knowledge of external reality need be no less direct just because it is not introspection.

All this is fair enough, and I suspect that it is undoubtedly true that my desire to emphasize certain similarities between new views of perception and earlier versions of indirect realism probably does reflect my dissatisfaction with recent trends in epistemology. I can't help but think that the introspective knowledge we can have of that which is common to both veridical and non-veridical perception is *better* than our knowledge of external reality. It is better because it is more secure. And it is more secure for the obvious reason that when we restrict our claim to the existence of the subjective component or perceiving (to appearance) we will be right whether or not our experience is veridical. Furthermore, I can't help but think that once one realizes that what we know introspectively, we know better, one will inevitably feel the force of the skeptic who wants to know what entitles us to think that our perception is veridical rather than nonveridical. Given that the character of the two experiences given through introspection is identical, one might think one needs at least some reason for choosing between alternative explanations of what might be causing this introspectively accessible internal state.

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