IGNORANCE, BLINDNESS, AND HOW TO TELL THEM APART

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IGNORANCE, BLINDNESS, AND HOW TO TELL THEM APART

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Uğur Özbak, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Ignorance, Blindness, and How to Tell Them Apart

In this thesis I examine, explicate, and defend an epistemology of perception which does justice both to the sentient and to the sapient aspects of human perceptual knowledge. Following Kant and Dretske, I distinguish simple, 'non-epistemic' seeing which is characterized as the differentiation of perceptible particulars by sensory means, from 'epistemic' seeing within which judgment—as ascription of features to perceived, localized particulars—is essential. I show that such a distinction between two aspects of human perception is vital for a proper understanding of our ability to acquire perceptually grounded beliefs (true or false) via sensory and cognitive means. Following Kant in conceiving empirical knowledge as a result of the co-operation of our faculties of 'sensibility' and 'understanding', I employ Dretske's information-theoretic terminology to explicate an account in which such a co-operation may occur. Disregarding or neglecting the distinction between simple and epistemic seeing, I then argue, is a source of philosophical catastrophe; resulting in relativistic or skeptical conceptions of empirical knowledge which are far from doing justice to our actual, fallible, and— most of the time—reliable ability to acquire knowledge of particulars within our ambient, perceivable environment.

ÖZET

Cehalet, Körlük, ve Aralarındaki Fark

Bu tezde, algı yoluyla edinilen bilginin hem tabii hem de akli yönlerine gerekli vurgunun yapıldığı bir epistemoloji incelenecek, açımlanacak ve savunulacaktır. Kant ve Dretske'nin ardından, algılanabilir tikel nesnelerin duyular aracılığıyla ayrıştırılmasından ibaret olan 'non-epistemik' algı ile zorunlu olarak yargı—yani yeri belirlenmiş tikel nesnelere nitelik yüklenmesi—içeren 'epistemik' algı arasında bir ayrım yapılacaktır. İnsan algısının bu iki yönü arasında yapılan bu ayrımın, algı yoluyla (doğru ya da yanlış) inançlar edinme kabiliyetimizin doğru bir şekilde anlaşılması için gerekli olduğu gösterilecektir. Ampirik bilgi, Kant'ın öğrettiği gibi, duyarlık ve anlak yetilerinin işbirliğinin bir sonucu olarak tasarlanacak; böyle bir işbirliğinin nasıl gerçekleşebileceği, Dretske'nin enformasyon teorisi terminolojisi kullanılarak açımlanacaktır. Son olarak, söz konusu ayrımın ihmal edilmesinin, insanın yanılabilir fakat—çoğu zaman—güvenilir olan algısal bilgi edinme kabiliyetinin gözardı edilmesi ve ampirik bilginin göreci veya kuşkucu şekillerde anlaşılması gibi felsefi felaketlere yol açtığı savunulacaktır.

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I got interested in the subject matter of this thesis in 2017, when in a lecture Professor Kenneth Westphal mentioned the difference between simply seeing a tire of some vehicle which happens to be flat and seeing *that* the tire of the vehicle is flat. The latter achievement, he rather avidly emphasized, required "not merely recognizing the vehicle and the tire, but also recognizing what shape the tire ought to have and that this one does not have it." It wouldn't be an exaggeration, I think, to admit that thinking through *that* difference, complaining to, and demanding further explanations from Professor Westphal is how I've spent the most of my remaining studies as a master's student. Since this thesis is the fruit of those inquiries, I am deeply grateful to Ken for the encouragement and enthusiasm he provided throughout. I wish also to express my debt to professors Gürol Irzık and Faik Kurtulmuş, whose support I felt not only through countless discussions but also through their welcoming receptivity and engagement with the issues, which have been a persistent source of inspiration. It has been an honor to have had the tuition of these three teachers of the craft. If I have any grasp at all of philosophical acuity, it is thanks to them.

Among my fellow peers, Erdinç Boyacı, Ahmet Gül and Fatma Kaya read portions of my drafts; sometimes critical, sometimes encouraging, they were always supportive and patient and I benefited greatly from discussions with them. And to my mother, father, and 'sticky' sister, go thanks for their ceaseless support and understanding, without which philosophizing about perception wouldn't be humanly possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are two distinct but not independent human achievements, both of which are commonly called ‘seeing’. A negative but simple way to distinguish them is to say that whereas failure in one of them is called ‘blindness’, failure in the other we usually call ‘ignorance’. Dretske (1969) distinguishes these two achievements by calling one ‘simple’ or ‘non-epistemic’ seeing and the other ‘epistemic’ seeing. Kant distinguishes between them by calling the former ‘perceptive’ and the latter ‘apperceptive’ consciousness. The historical claim of this thesis is that both Kant and Dretske had developed epistemologies of perception in which this distinction plays a very central and crucial role. It will be shown that the accounts of both writers are not only compatible, but also mutually supportive of and positively contributive to each other in philosophically rewarding ways. The philosophical claim of this thesis is that once one has in view the epistemology of perception that Kant and Dretske both espouse, along with several cautions they explicitly provide, one can avoid a very widespread and common philosophical pitfall in which very specific dichotomies arise and to which peculiar but mistaken answers are offered.

Accordingly, the first aim of this thesis is to locate and make explicit key moments within the writings of the two authors in which the crucial distinction is made. I show that both writers agree that the distinction in question is epistemologically vital in that both achievements are necessary and neither achievement by itself is sufficient for our coming to have perceptually acquired beliefs about our perceptible surroundings. I shall show, along the way, some

paradigmatic examples how failing to draw the distinction leads the inextricable problems in epistemology.

I start, in Chapter 2, by introducing the distinction in Dretske's terminology. I focus first on 'non-epistemic' or 'simple' seeing in order to isolate it and to specify to some extent what it consists in. After I offer a negative criterion by which it can be kept apart from its epistemic counterpart, I follow Dretske's (1969) *Seeing and Knowing* to provide a positive characterization of it in terms of 'visual differentiation'. Having isolated this distinct achievement, I then offer another characterization which will prove helpful for my subsequent comparative purposes. So I employ another terminology, that of information theory, in order to shed light on the character of 'simple seeing' and to distinguish it from epistemic seeing which is characterized now as 'information extraction'. Another important concept that will prove useful throughout is the concept of an 'information channel'. Following Dretske's (1981) *Knowledge and the Flow of Information,* I distinguish an '*object* of information', which will turn out to be mid-sized perceptible particulars of which we are (or can be) perceptually aware, from the *channel* through which that information is conveyed. After specifying in some detail what an information channel is, I point out several epistemological implications, one of which is that the possibility of receiving information through a sensory channel requires that the sensory channel through which that information is received is reliable, not that it is known to be reliable. Having the notion 'information channel' at hand, I go on to examine whether, and if so to what extent Dretske's notion of 'non-epistemic seeing' can help support a realist epistemology of perception. In this connection, I briefly mention Kuhn's (1996) paradigm-shifts and Hanson's (1958) remarks on 'seeing' as representative examples of failing to distinguish between epistemic and non-

epistemic seeing and thus falling into a very peculiar tendency to treat radical changes in scientific-world views as correspondingly radical changes in our visual perceptions of the world around us. Dretske's conception of 'non-epistemic seeing' enables us to understand that once we can tell apart our seeing of whatever it is that we see from what we judge of or what we believe about what we see; we aren't inclined to treat changes within our empirical understanding of the world as changes in our sensing of the ambient spatio-temporal world.

I turn, in Chapter 3, to Kant's account of perceptual judgment in close connection with the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic seeing. There is an important reason that I examine Kant's account of perception in connection with 'epistemic seeing'. I surmise that unlike Dretske and most contemporary epistemology; Kant speaks little, if any, about how we can see (truly, correctly, justifiedly) that so-and-so is the case. Rather, he speaks about conditions for the very possibility of epistemic seeing (truly, or not); and here the heading 'epistemic' serves to connote not specific truth-conditions but conditions for being *candidates* for any kind of truth-evaluation. Something takes on the title 'epistemic', in the sense proposed here, because it describes an event or situation in which a judgment is made, correctly or incorrectly, regarding the content, the character, or the current predicament of a certain perceptible environment. Hence, 'epistemic seeing' is 'epistemic' because it is the sort of achievement which can be directed towards perceived particulars, truly, falsely, or approximately as the case may be. In this connection, Kant's account of perceptual judgment constitutes a good account of information extraction and use of information in explicit ascriptions of features to perceived, localized particulars. Furthermore, Kant takes an important step back and asks, regarding 'simple', 'non-epistemic' seeing, how is it that our perceptual

experience is of things — particulars which are located and can be localized by us within our shared spatio-temporal framework through perceptual means. What conditions must be satisfied, Kant asks, such that we are able to enjoy an ongoing, episodic experience of perceptible particulars, particulars to which we can, most of the time, look again (re-identification), or simply ostend to (singular reference) within our surroundings? Examination of this issue shows that some minimal cognitive activity, of which I provide a Kantian sketch, is necessary for our experience to be so much as of any-thing. This point reveals a very striking similarity between the two writers: they both deny the Cartesian assumption of a purported introspective access we have to the cognitive processes through which we are perceptually aware of particulars. Both writers emphasize that to know something about a perceived particular in our surroundings, it is not necessary to also know that the channels or processes (sensory, environmental) through which one comes to know are indeed, de facto functional or reliable so as to afford a factually accurate characterization or description of the thing known. Both writers thus carefully distinguish between the mistakes we may or may not make in our considerations of what we see from whatever might go wrong within our cognitive sensory processing and environmental particularities which may or may not end up bearing on the accuracy or veridicality of our vision.

After specifying Kant's account of perceptual judgment as a crucial ingredient of 'epistemic seeing' and having established the parallelism between the two writers; I then turn, in Chapter 4, to examine and criticize an attempt to provide a purportedly Kantian account of human perception and perceptual knowledge which neglects the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic seeing. John McDowell tries offer a way out of what he takes to be a very widespread tendency to oscillate between two

unsatisfactory philosophical positions. Roughly, in epistemology of perception, the oscillation is between postulating an element of 'given' as a potential ground for justifying empirical beliefs (a naïve foundationalism) and, alternatively, rejecting any element that is outside the scope of conceptual realm and trying to conceive justification solely within one's system of beliefs (pure coherentism). The former, McDowell argues, falls victim to a mythical conception of what role the 'given' can play; the latter tries to conceive justification and empirical belief acquisition merely as a 'self-contained game' admitting of no external constraint whatsoever. Against this problematic dualism McDowell proposes his own positive account which is purportedly free of these mistakes. One way to put the structure of McDowell's contention is that there are only three possible (or: remotely plausible) views on the topic; two of them are deeply problematic, untenable, and unstable as they keep sending philosophers from one pole to the other. Hence the third option that McDowell proposes must be the right view to take. My objection to his attempted argument by elimination is that not only it fails to consider all the relevant (plausible) alternatives, but also that the alternative it proposes only seems plausible because it can deliver what it promises only by neglecting and disregarding the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic seeing. Kant's and Dretske's account of perception, I argue, do constitute an alternative to McDowell's problematic while respecting the distinction McDowell disregards. I end, in Chapter 5, by drawing out several lessons for a sound epistemology of perception along with brief suggestions about further ramifications.

CHAPTER 2

DRETSKE ON SIMPLE AND EPISTEMIC SEEING

2.1 Introducing the distinction

We see many things. We see people, sunsets, baseballs, etc.. Presumably, you are now seeing various letters and words that form a sentence. If these words make sense to you, you can also see that I'm trying to point out a fact about us that's strikingly boring — you're not learning anything but perhaps wondering why anyone would bother mentioning these things. Complications arise, however, when philosophers start talking about the nature of this ability we call 'seeing'. A particularly crucial issue is the role it plays in our acquisition of empirical knowledge. It looks like we see, or at least we claim to see, not just particular objects in our surroundings but also what they are, what properties they have, the way in which they relate to other objects, their location and so on. Our sense of sight is regarded as one of the most important resources for finding out the content and character of the objects and events in our environment.

The aim of this section is to introduce, argue for, and insist on the importance of a distinction between two fundamentally distinct but not independent senses of 'seeing'. Following Dretske (1969), I distinguish between simple, non-epistemic seeing; and epistemic seeing. The former is a basic visual ability through the exercise of which humans with functioning eyesight are capable of enjoying a visual field — a field within which there are elements which afford differentiation. Epistemic seeing, in contrast, involves further intellectual achievements influenced by experience, conceptual sophistication, linguistic maturity and perhaps even an

established scientific framework. Put colloquially, the distinction in question is that between simply seeing an *X* (whatever *X* may be) and seeing that it (the ostended *X*) is an *'X'*.

It seems clear that ordinary language is mostly insensitive to the proposed distinction. We use the word 'see 'for many different purposes and hence in many different senses. The proposed two senses distinguished here can be brought out by an example. While driving, I notice something unusual. I stop, get out of the car, and see that the tire of my car is flat. In order to do this, it seems that I must already know, or at least believe, a fair amount of things. In particular, my ability to see *that* the tire is flat requires not only recognizing, or noticing, or simply looking at the car and the tire (which happens to be flat); but also recognizing what shape (normal, un-flat) tires ought to have, and that this one does not have it. It looks like even such a mundane ability to see that a certain tire is flat involves a variety of beliefs and judgments on my part. This achievement—of me seeing that the tire is flat—is what Dretske calls "epistemic seeing" (henceforth: 'seeing$_e$'). It deserves the adjective 'epistemic' precisely because it makes a contribution to my repertoire of beliefs about my surroundings. It will be argued below that what we see epistemically is thus highly influenced by, and mostly dependent on, a variety of prior background knowledge, beliefs, classificatory systems and so on. A feature of English language is that when the verb 'to see' is followed by a factive nominal ('that') or an interrogative ('who', 'what', 'where', etc.); this is an implication of epistemic seeing. So, seeing who is at the room, what is happening, where the coin is, that the tire is flat, are all varieties of epistemic seeing (Dretske, 1979, p. 98).

Now, what is non-epistemic seeing (henceforth: 'seeing$_n$') and how does it differ from seeing$_e$? Going back to our example, suppose I had my three-year-old daughter

with me when the tire went flat and that while I'm trying to replace the flat tire, she is watching me. Assuming, naturally, that my daughter doesn't have any concept of a tire, let alone a flat one; the tire in question nevertheless occupies a portion of her current visual field. The sensory experience that my daughter is undergoing here is one in which her perceptual capacities enable her to perceive her surroundings — which include, among other things, a flat tire. But this perceiving of her surroundings by itself does not and need not pick out individuals (such as tires) for her to pay attention to. So, did my daughter see the flat tire? Of course she did. She didn't see the tire as flat, or that it was flat, but she has $seen_n$ a tire which happened to be flat. Her having of the perceptual experience of her surroundings (her $seeing_n$ a tire) is not eo ipso her forming any specific beliefs about whatever she perceives. Some minimal past experience and learning about tires and their recall and application is necessary for my seeing (and thereby identifying, recognizing) flat tires and various properties they might have, conditions they are in, how to remedy them, etc.. Whereas nothing of this sort is required for my daughter's ability to see tires. One's ignorance of tires doesn't bring about tire-blindness.

But what exactly, one might protest, does this establish? There is a difference, apparently, between me and my daughter but nothing so far has been said about what kind of difference this is. Should we not take very seriously the possibility that the difference in our abilities is merely a matter of degree? Perhaps she has so little, whereas I have a whole lot of beliefs about the object we're both seeing. Perhaps there is a threshold in the amount of cognitive activity, implicit but in operation, that I, but not my daughter, exceed. So the task I now take up is to locate a property that applies either (exclusively) to epistemic or to non-epistemic seeing such that its possession, or lack of it, is a clear indicator of the distinctness between the two. I will

suggest that whereas epistemic seeing is subject to an important kind of normativity — a fortiori liable, in varying degrees, to alteration, correction, modification, etc.; non-epistemic seeing is not. Seeing_n is a "pre-intellectual, pre-discursive capacity … which is largely immune to the caprice of our intellectual life" (Dretske, 1969, p. 28).

2.2 Characterizing non-epistemic seeing

Let us consider what can be characterized as 'mistaken'. A whole lot of things can: a political discourse, the claims of some prophet, perhaps certain moral decisions, etc. might all be mistaken. A common feature of these activities is that they are all subject to a certain kind of assessment: a discourse can be manipulative, a claim might be false, a moral decision might be unwarranted. I shall argue that the feature which segregates epistemic from non-epistemic seeing is that while there is always the possibility of making a mistake in epistemic seeing; it is irrelevant—indeed, nonsensical—to speak of mistakes in seeing_n. Let me expand on this. First, what is it to be possibly mistaken about something? A fairly simple way to explicate this, which would suffice for our purposes, would be to consider the English word 'mistake' along with similar constructions like 'misunderstand', 'mis-spell', 'misconstrue' and so on. One misunderstands when one fails to understand. One misspells when one fails to spell correctly. A similar failure is involved in a mistake. Indeed, the verb 'mistake' is *transitive*: it is characterized by having or containing an object. In other words, I can so much as make a mistake if there is some-thing about which I may or may not be mistaken. We mistake things with one another. I mistook a stranger for a friend the other day. My advisor recently told me that I was mistaken about some piece of literature. An important kind of normativity is attached, then, to

the kinds of activities whose outcome might possibly be characterized as 'mistaken'. Similarly, if I fail to see_e that the tire of my car is flat, this must be due to a failure on my part to take something as I was supposed to take it. Things can go wrong in a variety of ways. I might, for instance, take (correctly) what I see to be flat but I can (mis)-take—under a drug influence perhaps—that which is flat as, say, a very interesting kind of basketball. In such a case, I might report 'I saw a weird deflated basketball.' Or, more plausibly, I can take (correctly) what I see to be a tire but I can (mis)-take it as being perfectly normal (non-flat).

This possibility of making a mistake, and hence being subject to a specific kind of assessment, I submit, is the most straightforward candidate to characterize epistemic seeing. Indeed, if this element were lacking, it would be difficult to understand how anything that we see can have any relevance for knowledge. We often talk not only of simply 'observing', 'watching' or 'witnessing' things; but also about the 'accuracy' of our observations, our 'failure' to witness things, and so on. Not only are these abilities which we are more or less good at; but also abilities that we can, to a certain extent, become better or worse at. $Seeing_n$, on the other hand, is precisely what cannot be characterized in any of these ways.[1] Where there is no taking, there is no mis-taking. Not only is it not possible, it's also irrelevant and categorically inappropriate to speak of $seeing_n$ correctly or incorrectly. In this sense, my daughter

[1] Mention should be made however, of the fact that non-epistemic seeing is also subject to a kind of normativity such as acuity, sharpness, etc.. A special case wherein assessment of this kind occurs is the clinic of the ophthalmologist, where we are interested in our ability to see_n almost to the exclusion of our ability to see_e — the point is to inform the doctor, not about what the letters are in the chart, but whether and how well you can see_n them. Insofar as the biological processes or functions utilized in this ability can deter or improve, we can talk, with our eye doctors, of $seeing_n$ 'better' or 'worse'. There is a categorical, and a crucial, difference between these kinds of assessments, say, of color-blindness, nearsightedness, astigmatism, etc. and assessments of the epistemic sort that we employ in accuracy of observations, status of perceptual judgements, etc. which must be kept in mind throughout. Simply put, ignorance must not be confused with blindness. "The statement, "I see a red circle" and the statement "I see (am not blind)" are not logically of the same sort. How do we test the truth of the former, and how that of the latter?" (Wittgenstein, 1977, p. 13).

either does or does not see_n the tire and if she does, there is yet no question of truth or falsity. It is precisely on this point that J.L. Austin reminds us of the metaphorical nature of the common phrase 'deceived by our senses':

> [T]hough the phrase 'deceived by our senses' is a common metaphor, it *is* a metaphor; and this is worth noting […]. In fact, of course, our senses are dumb—though Descartes and others speak of 'the testimony of the senses', our senses do not *tell* us anything, true or false. (Austin, 1962, p. 11)

I submit, then, that this impossibility (and irrelevance) of mistake is a proper negative criterion to characterize and distinguish $seeing_n$.[2] $Seeing_n$ is not the sort of activity that can stand as a member of a class of which observations, inspections, judgments, beliefs, claims, propositions, etc. are members. It is precisely in this sense that $seeing_n$ is *non*-epistemic.

What is offered, however, is a negative criterion and as such, it doesn't specify what $seeing_n$ consists in. Accordingly, I shall now explicate Dretske's (1969) attempt to provide a positive characterization of $seeing_n$, which he casts in the form of an equivalence. Let *S* be a subject and *X* an object, person, or event:

> *S* $sees_n$ *X* = *X* is visually differentiated from its immediate environment by *S.* (Dretske, 1969, p. 20)

Let us note first that this equivalence is not intended to serve as a conceptual analysis of $seeing_n$. No one "is going to learn the meaning, or one of the meanings, of the verb 'to see' by examining this equivalence" (Dretske, 1969, p. 20). The task is to clarify and to explicate, not to teach or re-define meanings of terms. Consider the right-hand

[2] See Charles Travis, explicating the quoted passage from Austin, where the "idea is that, rather than *representing* anything as so, our senses merely bring our surroundings into view; afford us some sort of awareness of them. […] I cannot be confronted correctly or incorrectly, veridically, or deceptively. I simply confront what is there. Perception leads me astray only where I judge erroneously, failing to make out what I confront for what it is" (Travis 2004, pp. 64-5).

side of the equivalence. What is it for *X* to be 'visually differentiated'? The term 'visually' is to be understood simply in the sense that differentiation in question is by *visual*, not auditory or tactile, means. The key term, however, is 'differentiation'. Dretske suggests that *S*'s differentiation of *X* is "constituted by *X*'s *looking some way* to *S* and, moreover, looking different than its immediate environment" (Dretske, 1969, p. 20). This formulation, as Dretske is also aware, is misleading. What is crucial is that the locution 'looks some way' is not meant to be understood as implying that when *S* sees_n *X,* for some character or property *C,* it looks to *S* as though *X* is *C.* The phrase 'looks like' commonly has connotations of some or other kind of awareness on the part of the agent. If something 'looks like' such-and-such to me, this almost always suggests that I thereby believe something or other, of that thing, say, that it looks so-an-so, or as if so-and-so, etc.. Dretske wants his construction to be free of this implication:

> As I am using this phrase, *X*'s looking some way to *S* presupposes a sentient being (*S*) equipped with an appropriate visual apparatus by virtue of which, to employ an expression of the psychologists, *X* occupies a portion of *S*'s visual field. It presupposes or entails nothing about whether *S notices X,* whether he *takes,* or is inclined to take, *X* to be something in particular, or whether he *exploits* his visual experience in any way whatsoever. (1969, pp. 20-1)

The point may be clear enough. But allow me to take a moment to pinpoint what is at stake here. Suppose that *S* sees, as you also will, the following collection of distinct dots, in Fig.1 from an appropriate distance but for a brief period of time:

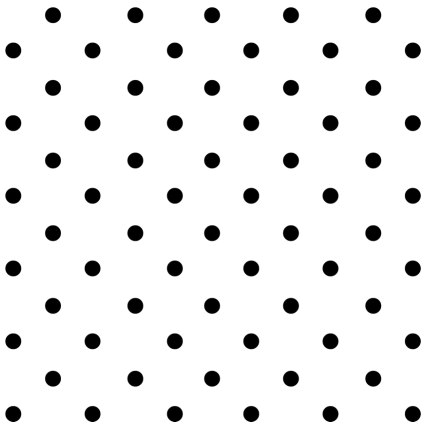

Fig.1 Seeing$_n$ Dots

Dretske is claiming, in effect, that if and when *S* sees$_n$ this collection of dots, although she will naturally be unable to report the number of dots—for she didn't have the time, nor the desire to count them—it will still be true that she saw all of them. Indeed, there will be sixty-six true statements, corresponding to each of the sixty-six dots above; that we can make about what *S* saw. Regardless of *S*'s beliefs (if any) about the dots, as long as the light from the figure is reaching and stimulating *S*'s visual receptors, and insofar as *S*'s brief experience involved all of the dots as distinct bits within her visual field, it will be true to say, of *S,* that she saw all of the sixty-six dots. It is important to notice that this 'differentiation' condition is a condition both on *S* and on *X.* It concerns the subject in that she must have a functioning visual apparatus through the exercise of which she comes to enjoy the resultant visual field. But it also is a condition on the objects of perception (on *X*) in that in order to occupy a visible portion of *S*'s field of vision, *X* must be discriminable, or differentiable. Non-epistemic seeing requires that there be particulars which are not only within one's perceptual field, but also particulars which afford discrimination by the prospective seer *S*.

2.3 Seeing$_n$ as reception of analog information

I have argued so far that there are two distinct senses of seeing and two corresponding activities which we have called non-epistemic and epistemic seeing. I have tried to examine the former in some detail, to offer a negative criterion by which to distinguish it, and then followed Dretske's (1969) positive characterization to spell out what kind of an activity it is. I want now to offer yet another characterization to amplify the non-epistemic character of seeing$_n$. Keeping the distinction at hand, in his (1981) *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*, Dretske offers a useful revision in terminology which turns out to be of considerable help for several things, the most important of which is understanding the relation between the two kinds of seeing we have been considering. Furthermore, his application of the tools of information theory to specify an epistemology of perception will prove invaluable for our subsequent purpose of relating his account to Kant's.

Seeing$_n$, in this new account in terms of information processes, is regarded as "a stage in the processing of sensory information in which information about the [seen object, *X*] is coded in" what Dretske now calls "analog form" (Dretske, 1983, p. 60). Before examining the proposed analog/digital distinction, however, a word about the term 'information' is in order. As Dretske employs the term, information is an *objective* commodity, "something whose existence (as information) is (largely) independent of the interpretative activities of conscious agents" (Dretske, 1983, p. 55). Hence, it is inappropriate here to speak of '*false* information' or '*mis*-information', for these "are not kinds of information—any more than decoy ducks and rubber ducks are kinds of ducks" (Dretske, 1981, p. 45). The number of rings in a particular tree stump, for example, carries information about the age of the tree. But the rings *cannot* carry this piece of information, say, that the tree is 27 years old,

unless, in fact, the tree *is* 27 years old. Understood thus, existence of information has a requisite dependency on some lawful regularity in nature, the (botanical) regularity for example, between having *x* amount of rings and being *x* years old. In Dretske's terms, there must be an exact *covariation* between the receiver and the source of some information.

To understand the purpose of the analog/digital distinction, consider the difference between a photograph and a statement.[3] Suppose I have a glass of water on my table and I want to pass on this piece of information to you. I can simply tell you, "There's a glass of water on the table"; if and when you hear and understand me, the information you receive is coded in *digital* form — no more information is conveyed than that there is a glass of water on the table. You weren't informed about how much water there is, what color the glass is, etc.. Alternatively, if I take a photograph of the scene and give you the picture, the same information is supplied in analog form. You can, if you wish, not only learn that there's a glass of water on the table, but how much there is, where it is, what color the glass is, and so on. There is a richness in your getting informed with the photo which is lacking in your getting informed by my statement. The phenomenal richness of our visual experience is accounted for by this richness in information we receive, in perception, in analog form. This 'analog' form (typically) is continuous in the sense that it affords vision of, say, fine shades of color in a way that might not be captured by our de facto conceptual resources. This is why our "experience of the world is rich in information in a way that our consequent beliefs (if any) are not" (Dretske, 1983, p. 60). An important reason why our consequent beliefs are thus relatively poor in information is that our conceptual or epistemic utilization of analog information involves a

[3] The following is Dretske's own example, put differently (1981, p. 137).

process which Dretske calls ‘digitalization’ during which loss of information unavoidably occurs, rather like the lack of information about color of objects in my statement in contrast to the photograph. In this new terminology, the passing from non-epistemic to epistemic seeing is regarded as “a process in which incoming information is coded in analog form in preparation for further selective processing by cognitive (conceptual) centers” (Dretske, 1983, p. 55). The difference between my daughter’s seeing_n a flat tire and my seeing_e it *as* flat, *that* it is flat, “is to be found in the different way information about [the tire] is coded (analog vs. digital)” (1983, pp. 55-6). But let us ask what this process of ‘digitalization’, the passage from analog to digital coding, consists in. What kind of an achievement is involved in this process whereby we come to see_e that the tire is flat in contrast to seeing_n a tire that happens to be flat? This is a process, Dretske tells us, in which

> (…) there is a systematic stripping away of components of information (relating to size, color, orientation, surroundings), which makes the experience of the apple the phenomenally rich thing we know it to be, in order to feature *one* component of this information — the information that it is an apple. Digitalization (of, for example, the information that *s* is an apple) is a process whereby a piece of information is taken from a richer matrix of information in the sensory representation (where it is held in what I call “analog” form) and featured to the exclusion of all else. (Dretske, 1983, p. 61)

Consider again our example. My daughter is looking at a complex scene, and in seeing the tire, she is receiving but not decoding information about this tire. Although she does not believe it to be a tire, let alone a flat one; she sees_n it insofar she has the experience in which sensory information from the tire is coded in analog form in a way which affords its visual differentiation from other surrounding, perceptible particulars. She wasn’t able, like I was, to convert, or decode that information into the belief that one of the tires is flat, simply because she wasn’t capable of that kind of classification with which one is able to *classify* a given tire as

flat. An achievement, to anticipate Kant, in which I not only perceive (see_n) but also judge (see_e).

2.4 Sensory channels as information channels

I have tried above to explicate an account of seeing which is relatively free of conceptual sophistication. Following Dretske, I have been speaking of '$seeing_n$' as an activity in which information coded in analog form is received by some sentient agent through visual means. "[W]hat we see in this first [non-epistemic] way of seeing is a function solely of what there is to see and what, given our visual apparatus and the conditions in which we employ it, we are capable of visually differentiating" (Dretske, 1969, p. 76). I shall now examine, in some detail, Dretske's treatment of our sensory-perceptual channels as information channels. First, a caveat is in order. Later in Chapter 3, after examining, in some detail, Kant's account of perception and perceptual judgment, I shall argue that for a proper understanding of epistemic seeing, Kant is a more helpful guide than Dretske. There are several reasons for this, one of which is that the account of perceptual judgment Kant provides will turn out to account better for what Dretske calls 'digitalization' of information, i.e., extraction of sensory information for cognitive use — an ability, as Kant will show, whose vehicles are judgments. Indeed, I shall argue in some detail that while Dretske's account of information reception and 'channels of information' is very helpful for his epistemology of perception, he doesn't, and Kant does, have an adequate account of information *extraction,* recognition, and judgmental use. In turn, what Kant's account can and should be supplied with is an account of sensory

channels as information channels, specified by Dretske's (1981) information-theoretic epistemology; an issue to which I now turn.

Let's start with an important distinction: in trying to understand our processes of perception; the *object* from which we receive information and the *channel* through which we receive that information should not be confused. The object, let us say, is some spatio-temporal particular in our surroundings whereas the information channel includes our sensory system (say, our eyesight, if the modality is visual) along with the media (say, the ambient lighting, clarity of atmosphere, etc.) through which we receive information about that particular. Our sensory experience depends, of course, not only on the objects perceived but also on the conditions of the channels through which we perceive them. These include, among other things, the proper functioning of our sensory apparatus, the kind and amount of illumination, the medium in which sensing occurs, etc.. Now, our sensory channels are, in an important sense, devoted to helping us track and negotiate our environment. Precisely because of this function, they are not particularly dedicated to identifying and tracking themselves, i.e., their own workings and functionings. Since appreciation of this fact is crucial for my purposes, allow me to expand this point by an example.[4]

Consider the fuel gauge of an automobile as a channel over which information about the quantity of gas left in the tank is delivered to the driver. This device fulfills this function by means of a 'sender', which measures the level of fuel, and a gauge which displays that level to the driver. There are many components in this process, each of which is necessary for the reliable delivery of this information — a 'float' that sits in the tank is attached to a metal rod held up against a resistor. This resistor, in turn, sends an electronic signal to the fuel display. This signal comes from the

[4] The following is a modification of Dretske's example in (1981, pp. 111-3).

car's battery via a small coil; the lower the float drops in the tank, the more current the resistor sends to the fuel gauge, and the closer the pointer gets to 'empty'. Let us call the level of fuel in the tank the 'source' and the position of the pointer the 'receiver' of information. Assuming the device to be functioning properly, as gauges normally do, the pointer position in 'E' or 'Empty' carries the information (about the source) that the fuel tank is almost empty. Now, fuel gauges normally function by thus *reliably tracking* the amount of gas left in the tank. Put in information-theoretic terms, this means that normally, the state of the receiver (the pointer) covaries exactly with the state of the source (the amount of fuel). Or, more technically, the equivocation between source and the receiver is zero (Dretske, 1981, pp. 111-2).[5]

Notice, however, that even during the reliable functioning of this device, the position of the pointer depends on a great many factors and conditions besides the amount of fuel at the source: the stability of the voltage from the battery, the persisting buoyancy of the float, the correct calibration of the pointer, and so on are all necessary conditions for the reception of the information. Notice further that *nothing* in the position of this pointer indicates that any (let alone all) of these factors are adequately operative. So, imagine a skeptic asking, 'given all these presupposed processes, what excludes the possibility of de facto failure of any one of them? And if there is nothing, as we admit, in the pointer to indicate, say, that the voltage has not weakened, which is a precondition of reliable delivery of information, then perhaps no information is conveyed by the pointer'. If we were to reply that we have very recently checked the voltage and confirmed its stability, the skeptic would ask how we can be sure that it didn't go haywire since it was checked. The conclusion this

[5] For concepts of 'equivocation' and 'noise', see Dretske (1981, pp. 1-26). Roughly, "[t]he equivocation is that information generated at s[ource] which is not transmitted to r[eceiver]. And the noise is that information available at r that is not received from s" (1981, p. 19).

line of thinking aims at is that fuel gauges, or, for that matter, measuring devices in general can *never* deliver the information they are engineered to deliver. This is a confusion, however, that springs from mistaking the object about which the information is received with *the conditions under which* the information is received. Fuel gauges do not, nor do they need to, tell us the amount of fuel and that the fuel gauge itself is in perfect working order. The presupposed conditions that were mentioned, conditions that sustain the reliable delivery of information, are *channel conditions.* As such, they belong to the framework within which information delivery occurs, not to the sources about which information is conveyed. (Dretske, 1981, p. 116)

For these reasons, no information channel can carry the information that the channel itself is quiescent, stable, reliable, or that it is functioning as an information channel (as it is supposed to function). Now there may be, and usually is, collateral information indicating the reliability of some channel, as in our checking the stability of the battery voltage, and there may be further ways of testing the channel by experiment, but it is important to notice that all this is a process of further cognitive inquiry. It is thus important not to confuse issues regarding our assessments of our information channels—e.g., by performing tests, checking their reliability, replacing worn-out parts, etc.—with the very existence of these channels. If those distinct issues are kept apart, we can see that in order for me to receive reliable information through such channels, it is necessary that the channel conditions do obtain, it is not a further requirement that they be known to obtain:[6]

> It is important to emphasize that what qualifies a condition as a channel condition is not that it is *known* to be stable, not that it is *known* to lack relevant

[6] This constitutes, in effect, a denial of the so-called 'K-K Principle' according to which for any proposition *P,* a necessary condition of my knowing that *P* is that I know that I know that *P.*

> alternative states, but that it *is* stable, *lacks* relevant alternative states, *in fact* generates no (new) information. (Dretske, 1981, p. 119)

None of this, of course, is to deny the fact that of course things can go wrong. Coils can break, the battery could drain. But if and when such possibilities are serious (genuinely probable and not merely skeptically entertained), we act accordingly.[7] To our fuel gauges, for instance, we apply periodic checking and recalibration, we replace our batteries and take precautions so that they remain reliable. What the skeptic above wants to insist on is that this admitted recognition of the possibility of occasional error should lead us into supposing that 'for all we know', we are always and globally in error. I have tried, in effect, to explicate the nature of information channels to bring out how they can deliver information and how we can receive it without it being necessary to also receive information about the conditions of the channels themselves. Consideration of these channel conditions requires recognizing that unlike what an information channel is a channel of, the channel itself does not and cannot generate information about itself. Later we shall see Kant emphasizing this point when he claims that "it is, indeed, very evident that what I must presuppose in order to cognize an object at all cannot be cognized as an object by me …" (*KdrV* A402).[8]

Though it may be too obvious to belabor, let me end by bringing this issue back to our perceptual systems. Not unlike fuel gauges, our sensory systems too are devoted to help us track and navigate our surroundings. As such, they function as conveyors of information, as channels through which we are informed about objects, persons,

[7] Regarding what constitutes a 'serious' or 'genuine' alternative, see: (Dretske, 1981, pp. 123-34) for a 'relevant alternatives' model of justification according to which what constitutes a relevant—as opposed to a merely logically possible—alternative is of course an issue that is essentially context-bound and domain-specific.

[8] Henceforth I follow the standard method in citing the 'A' and/or 'B' editions, followed by page numbers, of Kant's (1996) *Critique of Pure Reason,* abbreviated as *'KdrV'.*

and events around us; they don't have a function of conveying information about themselves. Like fuel gauges again, our sensory systems can and do occasionally fail to perform this function. The illumination may not be optimal, our eyesight deficient, cunning magicians present, and so on. Again, as with fuel gauges, we act accordingly in such cases: we adjust the lighting, go and see an ophthalmologist, or watch the magician from the backstage. Occasional possibility of visual deception or inaccuracy does not constitute sufficient reason for a general doubt regarding our perceptual reliability.

2.5 The role of seeing$_n$ in a realist epistemology

With the distinction between seeing$_n$ and epistemic seeing, and the specification of our sensory channels as information channels at hand, we are now in a position to draw an important consequence regarding epistemology of perception. I have argued that seeing$_n$ is a function simply of what there is to see and what, given our visual apparatus, we are able to visually differentiate. Put in information-theoretic terminology, seeing$_n$ is a visual ability through the exercise of which we receive information (coded in analog form) from our environment. What I now want to point out is that, given this understanding of seeing$_n$, we are in a position to acknowledge what exactly is, and what is not, subject to relativity in perception — a perennial issue which continues to occupy philosophers of perception.

We occasionally hear it said, not only by philosophers but by scientists and popular writers, that the English adage 'seeing is believing' is just outright false. In a sense, I have been examining, in this chapter, why and how this proverb is false, urging that seeing$_n$ is not believing. So there is a certain irony in the fact that though

many philosophers and scientists agree that it's false, they are mistaken about why. The common, and no doubt accurate, assumption shared by such writers is that in perception, our past experience, conceptual resources, classificatory habits, and even our expectations play a crucial role. Indeed, given sufficiently radical divergence in these cognitive factors, occurrence of a kind (or kinds) of relativity in our perceptions and conceptions of the world might be unavoidable. It is further supposed, however, that therefore, there *is no* shared ability by which we enjoy sensory access to a common and public environment. This is unfortunate, since it is false. A good example can be found in a popular article, "The Neuroscience of Illusion," where two neuroscientists, Susana Martinez-Conde and Stephen L. Macknik, start out by claiming that:

> It is a fact of neuroscience that everything we experience is a figment of our imagination. Although our sensations feel accurate and truthful, they do not necessarily reproduce the physical reality of the outside world. … [T]he real and the imagined share a physical source in the brain. So take a lesson from Socrates: "All I know is that I know nothing." (Martinez-Conde & Macknik, 2013, p. 6)

I have tried in this chapter to isolate and examine a way of seeing that enables us to see, not "figment[s] of our imagination", but what is there, ostensibly in front of us, to be seen; an ability by which we are confronted with objects in our surroundings. There is nothing that may or may not 'feel truthful' inherent in this ability. As an epistemological category, the concept of 'truth' (or 'falsehood' or '(in)accuracy') belongs to epistemic seeing. I cannot see_n truthfully, any more than I can digest what I eat truthfully. We can thus acknowledge the relativity which depends on conceptual factors in epistemic seeing "*without undermining the objectivity and publicity of what we see*" (Dretske, 1969, p. 77). This publicity, I have tried to show, resides in the fact that most of us, regardless of our cognitive skills and background, see_n the

same objects. Put differently, the relativity in the kinds of digitalization and conceptual utilization in epistemic seeing and consequent perceptual judgments does not undermine the fact that we share an ability whose exercise puts us in a shared predicament in which we receive (analog) information from our surroundings through visual means. What we make of that information, what we see to be the case, admittedly, is subject to a variety of factors, factors that deserve closer examination (which we shall give in Chapter 3) with Kant's account of perceptual judgment. What I'm trying to underscore here, however, is that it is a grave mistake, especially for epistemological purposes, to confuse epistemic seeing with $seeing_n$, either by not keeping them apart or by assimilating one to the other.

Another instance of such a tendency, now by a philosopher, is found in the infamous notion of 'incommensurability' in Thomas Kuhn's (1996) influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* A lot of disagreement exists about the nature and the extent to which Kuhn's 'incommensurability thesis' is to apply. We can nevertheless track, throughout his work, a tendency to think that given sufficient amount of shift in conceptual repertoire of a community of scientific inquiry (a phenomenon Kuhn famously calls a "paradigm shift"), there may ensue a corresponding shift in the perceptions of the scientists of a sort that "we may want to say that after a [scientific] revolution scientists work in a different world" (Kuhn, 1996, p. 135). But changes in worldview after which we may radically revise our cognitive classifications, associational tendencies, expectations—in short, how we see_e things—isn't tantamount to a corresponding change in what we see_n. Running these two issues together results, usually if not always, in philosophies where we wind up with perceptual relativism in short order. We can trace this tendency in

Kuhn to Norwood Hanson, who, in his *Patterns of Discovery* (1958), asks the question of "what is it to see" and answers as follows:[9]

> What is it to see boxes, staircases, birds, antelopes, bears, goblets, X-ray tubes? It is (at least) to have knowledge of certain sorts…. It is to see that, were certain things done to objects before our eyes, other things would result. (Hanson, 1958, pp. 20-21)

Both Kuhn and Hanson provide a generic example, I submit, of confusing what we simply see_n with what we see_e to be the case, what we make of what we see_n. If seeing X-Ray tubes was an ability that implied seeing that if such-and-such would be done to these objects, then so-and-so would result; the conclusion is then inescapable that my daughter, uninitiated to natural sciences, is blind when it comes to seeing X-Ray tubes. Indeed, if 'seeing' requires what Hanson suggests it requires, anyone whose experience lacks any familiarity with X-Ray tubes does not and cannot see an X-Ray tube. As Ruth Anna Putnam, in her critique of Hanson, aptly asks: "What sense could we make of requests for identification [say, of a child who points to an X-ray tube and asks, "what's that?"] (…) if we could not see what we cannot identify?" (Putnam, 1969, p. 494). Being clueless about X-Ray tubes doesn't render them invisible. "Ignorance of *X* does not impair one's vision of *X*; if it did, total ignorance would be largely irreparable" (Dretske, 1969, p. 8).

[9] Indeed, Kuhn cites Hanson's appeal to Gestalt psychology in order give some sense to the supposition "that scientists occasionally experienced shifts of perception" in paradigm shifts (1996, p. 113). As far as I can see, this tendency to appeal to results of Gestalt psychologists by philosophers to draw relativistic epistemological lessons originates in Reichenbach's (1938) *Experience and Prediction,* where he claims that the "mechanism of sensation is organized in such a way that it cannot produce a sensation without superimposing upon it a certain description," and that the objects of our sensations always have a "'Gestalt character'" (Reichenbach, 1938, p. 221). I am grateful to Gürol Irzık for pointing out to me this historical aspect of the issue. Norwood Hanson (1958, Ch.1) in turn, seems to be particularly impressed by Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 1958, pp. 193-229) on the issue of figure-ground ambiguity in Gestalt theory of perception. Though consideration of this exegetical issue is beyond the scope of this thesis, allow me to note that it is far from clear that such perceptual relativity is implied, as Hanson seems to think, by Wittgenstein's remarks.

I have tried, in what preceded, to distinguish simple sensory perception from acts of cognition by which we come to have beliefs and, with enough care, knowledge about the content and character of our environs. Following Dretske, I specified, using two different terminologies, key details of these two abilities. I believe that this variation in idiom is as it should be, for it provides a multitude of perspectives from which the issue can be approached. What I first called seeing$_n$ can be regarded as a process of analog information reception and this process, in turn, can be understood as enjoying a visual field within which there are discriminable elements. Another procedure I tried to follow was to focus more on the non-epistemic side of our distinction. As I briefly mentioned, the main reason of my selective focus is that regarding epistemic seeing, Kant's account of perceptual judgment is more adequate than Dretske's. For the purposes of the current chapter, just having our distinction in clear view, and having the conception of sensory channels as information channels at hand are crucial. With these, to the consideration of Kant's account we must now turn.

CHAPTER 3

KANT ON PERCEPTION AND APPERCEPTION

3.1 Transition into Kantian terminology

In this chapter I shall argue that the distinction we have been considering so far between simple, non-epistemic seeing and epistemic seeing corresponds, almost exactly, to Kant's distinction between mere perceptual consciousness and apperceptive perceptual consciousness of our surroundings. I shall begin by introducing a rather different terminology with which Kant articulates his view. The terms 'perception' and 'apperception' Kant retains from Leibniz, who employs them against a Cartesian assimilation of perceiving into thinking. There is indeed a tendency in Descartes to treat perception as a solely mental activity. Such a lesson he tries to draw with his famous wax example, where his "perception" of the wax, he suggests, "is a case not of vision, or touch, or imagination (…) but of purely mental scrutiny" (Descartes, 1996, p. 21). Against this equivalence, Leibniz wants to insist that not all perceptions must be self-conscious in the sense Descartes regards them to be:

> So it is well to make a distinction between *perception* … and *apperception,* which is consciousness or the reflective knowledge of [perception] and *which is not given to all souls or to any soul all the time*. It is for lack of this distinction that the Cartesians have made the mistake of disregarding perceptions which are not themselves perceived …. (Leibniz, 1991, p. 75, *emphases added*)

According to Leibniz, then, apperception is a reflective achievement during which one is aware not only of what one happens to be perceiving but also of one's own perceiving of it. Kant retains precisely this reflective character of apperception and

treats it, as Leibniz does, as an achievement which requires a self-awareness of a sort that is lacking in mere 'perception'. In this sense, Kant's perception/apperception distinction corresponds to the distinction between conscious and self-conscious awarenesses of particulars. Several further terms must be introduced, however, before we can go into Kant's detailed explication of these notions. The first, 'sensation', is defined by Kant as "the effect of an object on our capacity for presentation, insofar as we are affected by the object" (*KdrV* A20/B34). On Kant's view, however, sensations typically are not objects of our self-conscious awareness but are components in our acts of perceiving our surroundings (George, 1981; Hanna, 2001, p. 47; Westphal, 2021a, p. 199, 213). When Kant later talks about 'perceptions' he carefully treats them as "presentations accompanied by sensations" not as presentations *of* sensations (*KdrV* B147). So sensations, qua sensations, Kant tells us, "do not allow us to cognize any object at all" (*KdrV* A28/B44). In Dretske's terms, 'sensations' are aspects or components of our sensory information channels, they are not, at least typically, objects of our awareness.[10] Regarding this important issue, both writers are careful about not positing any *intermediaries* between our empirical judgments about objects and the objects themselves; intermediaries to which we have introspective access and only through which can we experience the world—such as Cartesian 'ideas', Humean 'impressions', or Russellian 'sense-data'. Thus Kant rejects the representationalist 'new way of ideas' without thereby neglecting the role that sensations (qua components within perception) are to play in our experience. Similarly, Dretske's account of information channels (§2.4) allows

[10] A nontypical case in which one might be said to be aware of one's sensation is being blinded by bright sunlight where one ends up with an an accidental after-image due to exhaustion of color receptors by the bright light. Kant too is explicit that sensations, as "basic materials" in experiential cognition are such that "we may not be able to distinguish" them from additions of our own cognitive powers, "until long practice has made us attentive to it and skilled in separating it" (*KdrV* B1-2).

him to appreciate the importance of various causal intermediaries (such as sensations) within our sensory channels without thereby postulating them as *objects* of our perception. He emphasizes that our sensory experience carries information about "not the proximal events on which it causally depends," such as sensations or retinal stimulations, "but the more distal ancestors in this causal chain" such as objects and events in our environs. "This, indeed, is why we do not see or hear" sensations. "We see (and hear) *through* them" (Dretske, 1981, p. 164). It is precisely by this move that both writers espouse a *direct realism* about objects of perception without thereby neglecting the role sensations play in our perceptual experience.

Let us proceed with Kant's account of perception, where Kant's aim is to arrive at a plausible conception of how, through which processes and functions can our sensibility and understanding (co-)operate so as to afford acquisitions of perceptual beliefs that are so much as *candidates* for being factually accurate, justified, or true. We get from sensations, then, to 'sensory' or 'empirical' intuitions. Kant defines an 'empirical intuition' as "intuition that refers to the object through sensation" (*KdrV* A20/B34). This referring 'to the object' requires, crucially, an integration of sensations so that, first, they are grouped together as a multitude but also so that they (this integrated collection of sensations) are capable of being referred to their putative source in our surroundings. We shall see shortly the crucial role this process of integration plays, and several epistemological implications thereof, in Kant's account of the character and nature of perceptive consciousness (seeing_n). Let me end this section by sketching, for terminological clarity, several further terms of art that Kant employs in his account of perception. The capacity by which we enjoy sensory experience Kant calls 'sensibility'. "[B]y means of sensibility objects are *given* to us, and it alone supplies us with *intuitions*" (*KdrV* A19/B33). In contrast to this

'receptive' capacity, we have the 'understanding' through which "objects are *thought*, and from it arise *concepts* (*KdrV* A19/B33). Empirical knowledge of our surroundings, Kant famously argues, requires the operation of both capacities in our cognitive judgments:

> Without sensibility no object would be given to us; and without understanding no object would be thought. (…) The understanding cannot intuit anything, and the senses cannot think anything. Only from their union can cognition arise. (*KdrV* A51/B75)

Only with the contribution of the understanding, and hence only by the use of concepts can empirical knowledge arise. An interdependency between sensibility and understanding is a necessary condition, as we shall shortly see in detail, for our exercise of epistemic seeing. With this preliminary clarification in terminology, let us look closer to how our distinction is drawn within Kant's account of perception.

3.2 Characterizing seeing$_n$ as perceptive consciousness

We are now in a position to recognize the convergences between Kant's account of perceptual knowledge and Dretske's. Let us start with Kant's explicit admission of our ability to see$_n$ an object without necessarily thereby seeing$_e$ it *as* such-and-so. In a rather similar example to my daughter's seeing$_n$ a tire without thereby seeing$_e$ it *as* a tire, Kant imagines a 'savage' who had never seen a house confronted with one:

> If a savage sees a house from a distance, for example, with whose use he is not acquainted, he admittedly has before him in his representation the very same object as someone else who is acquainted with it determinately as a dwelling established for men. But as to form, this cognition of one and the same object is different in the two. With one it is *mere intuition*, with the other it is *intuition* and *concept* at the same time. (Kant, 1992, pp. 544-5)

Kant is explicit that acquaintance with houses—or the possession of the concept 'house'—is not a necessary condition of seeing$_n$ them. Having a visual experience within which a house occupies a place isn't, as such, any knowledge of the house. Indeed, and precisely because of this, Kant shares our negative criterion of seeing$_n$ as an achievement the exercise of which cannot be characterized as 'mistaken', 'true', 'false', etc.. The first-time seer of a house is simply confronted with a house and yet makes no classification (accurate or otherwise), is ascribed to or predicated of the house by means of concepts—and hence through understanding;—the subject's visual experience, his perceptive consciousness (his seeing$_n$ the house) doesn't yet have an epistemic status; i.e., there is yet nothing that that perceiver can be mistaken about. As Austin warned us of the phrase 'testimony of the senses', Kant too stresses the metaphorical nature of the phrase 'deception of senses' by adding the qualification "the *so-called* deception of the senses" in more than one place (*KdrV* A303/B359; A376; my emphasis). This agreement between Dretske and Kant regarding the negative criterion (the irrelevance of mistake) of seeing$_n$ is explicitly stated in the *Critique*:[11]

> … truth and illusion are not in the object insofar as it is intuited, but are in the judgment made about the object insofar as it is thought. Hence although it is correct to say that the senses do not err, this is so not because they always judge correctly but because they do not judge at all. (*KdrV* A293/B350)

This difference Kant emphasizes regarding the epistemic status of a judgment and lack thereof in empirical intuitions is, I submit, precisely the difference in epistemic

[11] About this remark of Kant's, Hanna points out that "Here Kant is stressing the difference between a judgement and an empirical intuition. An empirical intuition is an immediate sensory grasp of an object. It cannot be either true or false, strictly speaking, because it only delivers an object of appearances to the mind through the medium of the senses. So it does not thereby produce, by means of the understanding, any *thought* about that object" (Hanna, 2001, p. 59).

status of seeing$_e$ that something is such-and so and the lack of such a status in simply seeing$_n$ something.

But let us ask, as we did with Dretske's account of seeing$_n$, what, according to Kant, perceptive consciousness consists in. What is Kant's positive characterization, then, of non-epistemic seeing, or, in Kant's words, of perceptive awareness without apperceptive perceptual judgment? Here Kant offers a rather intricate account of what I shall call 'conditions for the possibility of non-epistemic seeing'. Let us remember that in Dretske's (1969) positive characterization, the proposal was simply that there must be an object which affords visual differentiation along with a subject with appropriate visual apparatus who is capable of such differentiation. Though Kant is in agreement with Dretske here, he wants to account for non-epistemic seeing not only by claiming that there is such a capacity deserving the label 'seeing$_n$' but also by articulating *how* such a capacity can be at all possible for us human beings. Thus he poses a rather elaborate question: How is it so much as possible, what conditions must be satisfied, Kant asks, such that we prospective perceivers can enjoy an experience in which there can so much as *be* particulars (whatever they are) sufficiently stable and persisting so as to afford not only differentiation by perceptual means but also referentiality in a shared, spatio-temporal framework? How is it possible, in other words, that the 'savage' is able to have a '*mere* intuition' of the house? Although the full-fledged answer Kant gives to this question is beyond the scope of this thesis, part of his answer is important both for understanding another critical respect in which he agrees with Dretske and for understanding how to avoid a rather common yet dangerous epistemological temptation.[12] An issue the importance of which both writers acknowledge is the role of *temporality* in perception and the

[12] In what follows, I am building upon Westphal's (2019) explication of Kant's account of perceptual experience and knowledge.

cognitive elements involved in our perceptual-motor behavior; the temptation to avoid is negligence of factors that go into this integrative process which affords perceptive awareness ($seeing_n$) of our surroundings. Let me expand upon this.

I have mentioned above that in Kant's account, empirical intuitions result from an integration of a sort that brings sensations together into one empirical intuition so that the intuition can be of some one thing, over there and now. Kant calls this kind of integration "the synthesis of apprehension in the intuition" (*KdrV* A98):

> … in order for this manifold [of sensory intake] to become unity of intuition … it must first be gone through and gathered together. This act I call the *synthesis of apprehension*. For it is aimed directly at intuition; and although intuition offers a manifold, yet intuition can never bring this manifold about as a manifold, and as contained moreover *in one presentation*, unless a synthesis occurs in this process. (*KdrV* A99)

But more is required than this to get an experience which might properly be characterized as an *ongoing* experience. As phenomenological reflection upon our experience reveals, we are not, in our perceptual experience, simply bombarded with incoherent and continual influx of ever-fleeting sensory stimulations. In William James' famous words, we do not experience the world "as one great blooming, buzzing confusion" (1981, p. 262). Rather, our experience is usually of particulars to which we can, for example, look again, re-encounter, or re-identify, etc. There has to be a basis, Kant therefore claims, "for summoning up a perception from which the mind has passed to another over to the subsequent ones—and for thus exhibiting entire series of perceptions" (*KdrV* A121). This further synthesis Kant calls "synthesis of reproduction in imagination" (*KdrV* A100) and it is ascribed the function of integrating empirical intuitions into an ongoing, episodic experience. This function, Kant claims, is necessary for a philosophical conception of experience which does justice to the apparent temporality of perception. We have then, two

integrative processes in Kant's account, one which is 'synchronic'—in the sense that it operates on momentary sensations to provide empirical intuitions—and the other which is 'diachronic' in the sense that it operates over successive, ongoing perceptions so as to afford subsequent recognition of them as intuitions of some *one* object or event in our surroundings. The capacity through which these sensory syntheses and integrations occur Kant calls the "power of imagination" (*KdrV* A121).[13] These synthesizing functions of the imagination, Kant thinks, are necessary conditions for the very possibility of perceptual consciousness (of having 'mere intuitions') or, in Dretske's terms, for the very possibility of non-epistemic seeing.[14]

Now, although consideration of such integrative processes is lacking in Dretske's (1969) account of non-epistemic seeing, he acknowledges the crucial importance of temporal integration in *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (1981). In strikingly similar terms to those of Kant, he writes:

> To understand how certain sorts of information are registered, it is important to understand the way a sensory representation may be the result of a temporal summation of signals. To think of the processing of sensory information in static terms, in terms of the kind of information embodied in the stimulus *at a particular time*, is to completely miss the extent to which our sensory representations depend on an integrative process *over time*. (Dretske, 1981, p. 145)

Any perceptual episode during which we are able to differentiate individuals from their surroundings within some region of space and through some period of time

[13] Regarding the seemingly peculiar choice of the term 'imagination' (*Einbildungskraft*) for this process, see (Brook & Wuerth, 2020) who point out that "[Kant] meant something rather different from what we now mean by the term 'imagination' (…). For Kant, imagination is a connecting of elements by forming an image: "… imagination has to bring the manifold of intuitions into the form of an image" (A120). If 'imagination 'is understood in its root sense of image-making and we see imagination not as opposed to but as part of perception, then Kant's choice of term becomes less peculiar". See also Wilfrid Sellars who suggests that Kant uses the word 'imagination' "not because it connotes imagery but because imagination is always the representation of singular objects: we imagine not "houseness" but *a* house; we imagine not "landscapehood" but *a* landscape" (Sellars, 2002a, p. 67).

[14] See also Westphal (2021a, pp. 113-4) and Strawson (1970).

requires such an integrative process. It is important to note, however, that the 'integration' in question is a process the workings of which we are *not* self-consciously aware. This is why Kant characterizes 'imagination' as "a blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition whatsoever, but of which we are conscious only very rarely" (*KdrV* A78/B103). This is to say that although imagination makes an important contribution to our experience, this contribution cannot, as it were, be "read off" from the experience introspectively — "to say that [an element] is present in the experience by virtue of being imagined is not to say that it is *presented as* imagined" (Sellars, 2002b, p. 422). Put in information theoretic terms, the integrative processes of imagination belong within our sensory channels of information and as such they are part of sub-personal functionings of our sensory system — they are not themselves objects of which we can be aware through such channels. As mentioned above, they are conditions that must be satisfied for the very possibility of seeing$_n$; i.e., our capacity to receive sensory information coded in analog form. Accordingly, Kant here proposes an account of how we must conceive of the processes in question if we are ever to account for the integrated and ongoing nature of our sensory experience. We shall see later how this important convergence of the two writers provides a strong case for what is called 'externalism regarding cognitive justification'. Before we proceed to examine the account Kant gives of epistemic seeing, i.e., of information *digitalization and extraction* in perceptual judgments, a consequential issue must be examined, if briefly, to avoid neglecting an intricate detail in Kant's account of perceptual syntheses. Ignorance of this issue, as I shall demonstrate later in Chapter 4, brings about significant misreadings of Kant regarding the precise relation of our perceptual and judgmental capacities.

3.3 Forms of syntheses in perception

I have tried above to examine Kant's account of non-epistemic seeing and to point out some aspects Kant thinks are important for a proper conception of seeing$_n$ as an ongoing and integrated temporal achievement. In information theoretic terms, I have tried to specify at least some of the channel conditions for the possibility of our receiving information, coded in analog form, from our environs. Or, to go back to the Leibnizian terminology of Kant, we have scrutinized parts of what perceptive consciousness requires. It seems appropriate at this point to acknowledge that once we have deliberated over the integrative synthesizing processes which Kant emphasizes—and with which Dretske agrees—calling non-epistemic seeing 'simple' no longer sounds very fitting. This, I believe, is as it should be. The very possibility of our seeing$_n$ our surroundings, as we saw Kant argue, requires operations of integration and sensory syntheses which are, although sub-personal, quite elaborate. The question naturally arises then of wherein this integrative complexity lies. And Kant is explicit and careful to remind us that such unifying or integrative activity cannot be attributed simply to our *senses.* A sensory "manifold's combination," he tells us, "can never come to us through the senses" (*KdrV* B129). It is here that we must recognize that our 'sensibility' does not simply consist of, nor is it reducible to, what we merely *receive* through our senses; that in sensibility, not only information reception, but also a kind of integration and even extraction of information (by the imagination) occurs.[15] This is part of the reason why Kant treats empirical intuitions, which are, in a sense, *products* of the integrative functions, as *Erkenntnisse* ('cognitions') of visible objects. It is vital to recognize here that the term

[15] Kant thinks that "imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself" and that sensory intuitions require "something more than our receptivity for impressions, viz., a function for their synthesis" (*KdrV* A120fn.).

'*Erkentniss*', unlike its usual contemporary rendering ('knowledge') and its connotations, does not imply any epistemic status. As Wilfrid Sellars carefully reminds us, Kant

> is using the word 'knowledge' in a way which is very uncustomary today. We build into the very word 'knowledge' probable truth. But Kant doesn't build that into it because he has this more basic notion that there is a kind of awareness of objects … which is *prior* to general propositional knowledge. (Sellars, 2002a, p. 44)

The *kind* in the 'kind of awareness', I submit, is the non-epistemic, though sub-personally integrated kind; and the awareness in question is precisely that through which subjects are sensorily confronted with objects in their environs to which they *can* direct their attention.[16] This, in turn, is nothing but Dretske's seeing_{n}, or, Kant's perceptive consciousness.

Thus distinguishing 'cognitive' from 'epistemic' status and ascribing to sensory intuitions the former but not the latter allows one to make proper sense of why, according to Kant, intuitions are kinds of *Erkenntnisse* (hence not mere passive receptions of sensory stimuli), but do not for that reason have an epistemic status — they do not, as it were, claim or judge anything so as to be able to admit of truth-evaluation.[17] They do not, by themselves, provide us with episodes of the sort that provide any occasion for prospective evaluation of factual accuracy or lack thereof. But their not admitting such epistemic evaluation isn't a reason for believing that they do not admit of *any* kind of evaluation whatsoever. On the contrary, insofar as

[16] See also Westphal (2021b, p. 17), who points out that "Kant typically (though not exclusively) uses *Erkenntniß* (cognition), whether singular or plural, to designate subjective states, 'perceptions', which connect to some object distinct to the *S*ubject whose perception it is. (Recall that by 'perception' Kant does not automatically mean 'apperception'!) As George (1981) indicates, at the time, the term *Erkenntniß* was used (*inter alia*) to denote indexical, demonstrative, ostensive or deictic reference to (putative) particulars".

[17] Recall (Chapter 3.2 above), in this connection, Kant's remark that "truth and illusion are not in the object insofar as it is intuited" and that "although it is correct to say that the senses do not err, this is so not because they always judge correctly but because they do not judge at all" (*KdrV* A293/B350).

they are available as *synthesized* intuitions and hence are subject to various functionings within our sensory channels of information, they have a cognitive status — they do not, as it were, just happen to us. It is only through such integrative and localizing—cognitive but non-epistemic—activity, occurring within sensibility that we can so much as have objects (and not chaotic, fleeting sensations) which we can at all see_n.

Here we come to see the important sense in which non-epistemic seeing, according to Kant, is *not* non-cognitive. We can only have any*thing,* any perceptible 'this' in our environs if we have sufficiently integrated (within some region of space, and through some period of time, 'here, now') intuitions as a result of which we are ever able to 'look at', 'glance upon,' 'pay attention to,' 're-identify', 'recognize' or 'see_n' any it*,* such that we might judge *of it* that *it* is such-and-so or displays such-and-such characteristics. Kant claims that an "intuition refers directly to the object and is singular" (*KdrV* A320/B377). Once we appreciate how such singularity and directness is so much as possible, it is no longer puzzling how non-epistemic seeing is a 'cognitive' activity; because on this model "intuitions would be representations of *thises* and would be conceptual in that peculiar way in which to represent something as a *this* is conceptual" (Sellars, 1968, p. 3).

Unlike what we might prima facie have expected, the line between information reception and information extraction and the line between what is and what is not self-consciously available to a perceiver do not align neatly with each other.[18] There are, as we can now see, processes of information extraction, differentiation and integration which are conceptual in the sense that they require integrative and

[18] Similarly, the line between non-epistemic/epistemic and between non-cognitive/cognitive do not align (for we have seen the functioning of the imagination as a cognitive albeit non-epistemic activity).

synthesizing cognitive activity on the part of the perceiver but which are nevertheless sub-personal because they are processes the actualization of which the perceiver is not aware.

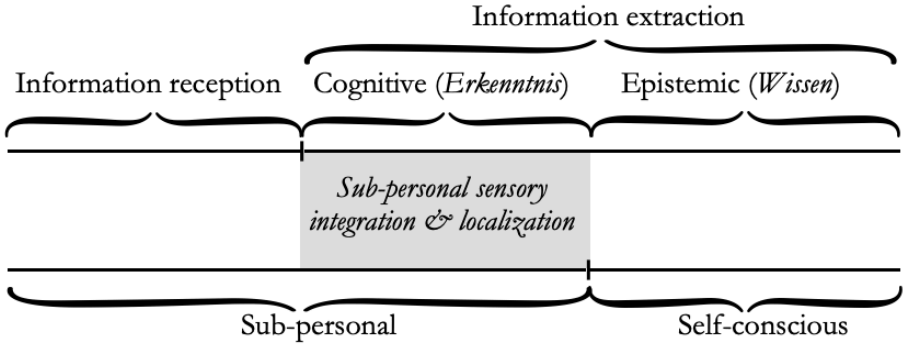

Fig. 2 Sub-personal sensory syntheses

That there is this gray area which represents an overlap of our sub-personal cognitive processes with a basic level of sensory integration and (analog) information extraction is accounted for by Kant's conception of 'imagination' as a faculty which mediates between "the two extreme ends, viz., sensibility and understanding … for otherwise sensibility would indeed yield appearances, but would yield no objects of an empirical cognition, and hence no experience" (*KdrV* A124).

There is a sense, then, in which sensibility (qua involving functions of the imagination) is subject to normative constraint because it involves cognitive capacities within our perception. This fact, however, does not entail that the normativity in question is of the epistemic sort for which we are responsible in perceptual judgments. Mention was made previously (in Chapter 2.2) of a distinct kind of normativity to which non-epistemic seeing may be subject. We are now in a position to see why (and, to some extent, how) this must be so. "[T]he processes and products of transcendental imagination involve *proper* functioning, where its proper functions are specified normatively in terms of facilitating the generation of veridical experience" (Westphal, 2006, p. 279). It is essential to remember—and we shall see

that it's catastrophic to forget—that the admitted normativity in our exercises of sensibility (of our seeing$_n$ our surroundings) within which conceptual capacities are actualized (albeit sub-personally) to integrate sensory intake into an ongoing experience isn't eo ipso a ground for treating the status of our non-epistemic awareness (our seeing$_n$) as an *epistemic* status. The crucial difference being emphasized here shall be even more apparent once we see Kant's account of perceptual judgment.

Kant told us that through sensibility, "objects are *given* to us, and it alone supplies us with *intuitions*" (*KdrV* A19/B33). Our focus so far has been on perceptual and cognitive processes through which objects—and not, say, chaotic sensations, retinal stimulations, etc.—are given to us. The synthesizing and integrative processes of imagination that we have examined are necessary for the very possibility of having objects to which we can refer and ascribe characteristics in perceptual judgments. As Sellars put it, the "role of an intuition is a basic and important one. It is the role of bringing a particular object before the mind for its consideration" (Sellars, 2002b, p. 429). But let us note that according to Kant, it is crucial that having an object thus 'before the mind for its consideration' is not having a *consideration* of it before the mind! Otherwise, a sensory intuition wouldn't be 'non-epistemic'.

Remember once again the example of the 'savage' Kant gives where the first-time seer of a house, although lacking any concept of a house, "admittedly has before him in his representation [visual field] the very same object as someone else who is acquainted" with houses (Kant, 1992, pp. 544-5). Our very ability to have 'the very same object' in front of us despite possibly radical divergences in our repertoires of empirical concepts is thus accounted for by our shared cognitive capacity to have sensory intuitions. These intuitions (along with the integrative sub-personal

processes that go into them) supply us with objects (discriminable particulars) that *allow for* epistemic consideration — consideration which we might or might not give (as the 'savage' does not). This brings us, finally, to apperceptive consciousness, to the explicit epistemic use of concepts in acts of empirical judgments, or, in short, acts of seeing$_e$.

3.4 Characterizing seeing$_e$ as apperceptive consciousness

We have seen above that Kant's account of perceptive consciousness require, of sensory perception, that various particulars in our environs are visually presented (intuited) and that they afford differentiation by their features and spatio-temporal regions or boundaries. I shall now examine Kant's treatment of epistemic seeing, or, of apperceptive consciousness with which we are able to see, of a particular, that it has such-and-such characteristics or features. Let us again use the example of a house in order to see what difference Kant thinks there is between the 'mere intuition' (seeing$_n$) of a house and seeing$_e$ that some (ostended) object is a house. The latter achievement, unlike the former, involves "*intuition* and *concept* at the same time" (Kant, 1992, p. 545). The concept(s) in question, of course, include the empirical concept of a 'house' — the concept under which sensory intuitions of the house (the perceived 'this') are brought within the predicative perceptual judgment that it (the ostended particular) is a house.

Crucially for Kant, apperceptive consciousness involves judgments we make about the content and character of perceived particulars within our surroundings. One basic form of perceptual judgment is that of simple feature ascription: '*X* is *F*', e.g., ascription of the predicate 'house' to that perceived (intuited, hence referable) object

over there in the judgment '*that* is a house'. As we saw above (in Chapter 3.1) Kant argues that empirical knowledge of particulars requires the operations both of our sensibility (through which we have empirical intuitions) and of our understanding (with which we employ concepts in apperceptive acts of judgment). And only insofar as the understanding is involved in such acts of judging can there be any epistemic status, any candidacy for truth, falsity, justifiedness, etc.. Accordingly, Kant points out that

> … both truth and error, and hence also illusion as the process of mistakenly leading to error, are to be found only in the judgment, i.e., only in the relation of the object to our understanding. (*KdrV* A293/B350)

Consider more closely the proposed involvement of the understanding. One aspect that will turn out to have considerable epistemological significance is the necessary role of *ascription* within acts of perceptual judgment. Kant distinguishes between merely thinking some thought (entertaining some possibility, proposition, or belief) and ascribing what one thinks or entertains to some particular(s) within one's surroundings.[19] The ascription in question is a necessary condition, Kant argues, for the very candidacy we have been assigning to epistemic seeing. In turn, a necessary condition for such ascription—of any feature or property to any particular—is that the concept(s) employed are concept(s) that Kant characterizes as 'objectively real'. The question arises, then, of what it is for a concept to have 'objective reality' (*objective Realität*) so that it can be employed to ascribe features to particulars? Here is Kant's answer:

[19] "All that is required in order for me to think something is that I do not contradict myself, i.e., that my concept be a [logically] possible thought. But I require something further in order to attribute objective reality to a concept (i.e., real possibility, as distinguished from the merely logical possibility just mentioned)" (*KdrV*, Bxxviifn.).

> If a [concept] is to have objective reality, i.e., if it is to refer to an object and have in that object its signification and meaning, then the object must be capable of being *given* in some way. For otherwise the concepts are empty; and though we have thought by means of them, we have in fact cognized nothing through this thinking, but have merely played with presentations. To be given an object—if this is not again to mean to be given it only indirectly, but is to mean, rather, to exhibit it directly in intuition—is nothing other than to refer the presentation of the object to experience (whether actual, or at least possible, experience). (*KdrV* A155-6/B195-6)

Hence, any concept can be employed within any prospective empirical judgment only if that concept is capable of being referred to (or predicated of) an intuited, sensed particular within our environs. In other words, for a concept to be 'objectively real' is for that concept to be susceptible to actual sensible instantiations of particulars, susceptible in the sense that it is (or at least it *can be*) about some aspect of perceptible particulars in our environs — for the characterization of which that concept is employed. More important still is that the 'susceptibility', the kind of bearing at issue here is one in which the issue concerns perceptual judgments which are true or false. Kant's requirement of 'objective reality' is a requirement that concerns conditions not of being true (or justified) judgments but conditions of *being a judgment* — for being the sort of thing that can be true or false by virtue of being directed towards (being about) some particular(s).[20] To put it in Dretske's terminology, if a concept is 'objectively real' then it must afford use with respect to some particular or particulars (of whatever kind or scale) from which we can receive and extract analog information, information which can be digitalized, from particulars we can see_{n}.

[20] "The designation 'objective reality' is common throughout the Mediaeval and Modern periods, and retains use in optics: In contrast to the eyepiece, the lens at the other end which aims at an object is called the 'objective lens' (of a binoculars, camera, microscope or telescope). The sense of 'objective reality' = directed towards an object" (Westphal 2021b, p. 15).

A final key element in Kant's account of epistemic seeing is the recognition that there is a mutual interdependency between ascribing features to some spatio-temporal particular in perceptual judgment and delimiting the region of that particular within our perceptual environment (*KdrV* B162).[21] Furthermore, localization and property ascription in seeing$_e$ is necessarily a temporally extended, episodic achievement — one can only localize and ascribe features to a particular if that particular is enduring enough so as to afford identification (and boundary recognition) within some period of time (Westphal, 2021a).[22] Kant thus shows, I submit, that both epistemic and non-epistemic seeing are necessarily temporally extended achievements. Such ascription and delimitation (since one cannot do one without doing both) is a necessary condition for any claim or judgment to have any epistemic standing — any status "as a candidate for anything *known* or *knowable*; this status requires that *S*omeone *use* [objectively real concepts] *ascriptively* to ascribe characteristics or features *to* some localised particular(s) …" (Westphal 2021a, p. 117).

Let us sum up Kant's explication of epistemic seeing step by step over his example of seeing a house (and seeing$_e$ that it is a house). Kant starts by claiming that seeing$_e$ that that (ostended) object over there is a house involves judging that it is a house. This judgment requires, in turn, ascription of the property 'house' to a perceived (intuited) particular within one's surroundings. The ascription at issue in turn requires that the concept through which the feature is ascribed is objectively

[21] This thesis, as Westphal points out, puts Kant alongside Gareth Evans in his (1975) account of predication in which it is argued "that mastery of predicates within some language requires being able to distinguish particulars or their specific aspects which are properly characterized by the predicate(s) in question, where such discrimination involves identifying by delimiting the relevant region occupied by the relevant particular(s) or their aspect(s). Evans showed that ascription of any characteristic and spatio-temporal localization by delimitation of any particular exhibiting that characteristic are mutually interdependent […] achievements" (Westphal 2021a, p. 26). See Evans (1975, p. 352).
[22] See Westphal (2021a, pp. 147-9, 173-82, 199-219).

real; i.e., that it is the sort of concept that is capable of being so ascribed (correctly *or* incorrectly) to intuited particulars. Finally, there is a biconditional dependency between ascription of features and delimitation of particulars to which those features are ascribed in explicit perceptual judgments. In other words, one can only predicate, of a particular one is currently seeing$_n$, that it is a house, only if one can localize the boundaries of that which is (presumably) a house within some region of space and through some period of time. Hence, the epistemic status of seeing$_e$, of apperceptive consciousness "are to be found only in the judgment, i.e., only in the relation of the object to our understanding" (*KdrV* A293/B350).

To put things properly in our comparative context, let us finally reformulate Kant's account in information-theoretic terms. Kant distinguishes between reception of analog of information in seeing$_n$ from digitalization (i.e., extraction and use) of that information in acts of seeing$_e$. If no digitalization occurs (if one does not apperceive what one merely perceives), then what we have is 'mere intuition' in which an object is sensorily present in our experience. If and when we apply concepts to an object (and thereby judge that it is such-and-so), digitalization and explicitly self-conscious extraction of information occurs (the understanding subsumes the intuition under a concept within an act of judgment). And only by such involvement of understanding's utilization of concepts can there be any epistemic status, any possibility of truth-evaluation.

CHAPTER 4

A MCDOWELLIAN BLINDSPOT

4.1 The diagnosis of McDowell's problem

In this chapter I shall argue, by way of example, how and why insensitivity to the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic seeing leads to significant trouble in trying to account for human perceptual knowledge. One philosopher whose writings aim, among other things, to provide a satisfactory Kantian conception of perceptual knowledge is John McDowell. Before going into the details of his treatment, however, several caveats should be noted to forestall needless complications. The first is that there is no one account which can be attributed to McDowell as the account of perception he offers. His renewed attempts, revisions and modifications throughout decades constitute a remarkable document of a philosopher trying to tackle an intricate problem. However, although this cannot be demonstrated here, McDowell's revisions to his views disregard the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic seeing and so the difficulties I shall be raising persist throughout. Second, understanding McDowell's desideratum requires appreciating the generality of his philosophical concern. He treats issues of perception as a local problem which, if properly understood, recurs in various areas of philosophy.[23] I shall, however, only consider his account in connection with the epistemology of perception.

Let me begin by trying to sketch what McDowell takes as the philosophical bind he seeks to untie. A helpful image for the kind of predicament from which McDowell

[23] See, for example, McDowell (1996, pp. 89-91) where he briefly explicates the parallel between the bind he has been talking about in philosophy of perception with the one he finds in philosophy of action.

wants to escape is that of a seesaw (McDowell, 1996, p. 9). A widespread tendency in philosophy, McDowell thinks, leads us to waver back and forth between two sides of a dualism — a dualism each side of which generates its own inextricable problems. An initial formulation he offers is the "dualism of scheme and Given" (1996, p. 4). The term 'scheme' pertains to the human activity of using systems of concepts—conceptual *schemes*—within empirical judgments or beliefs. As we have seen with Kant above, even our most basic perceptual judgments such as seeing$_e$ that it (the ostended particular) is a house involves use of empirical concepts, such as the concept 'house'. We can easily generalize and say that since any empirical specification of the world involves using concepts, and since using concepts involves a choice of concepts, and since there is no reason to think that there is any one (privileged) system of concepts; there is this minimal aspect of selection, hence a kind of arbitrariness that apparently infects our acquisition of empirical belief or knowledge. McDowell prefers to put this point in Kantian terms by saying that all empirical cognition involves an element of 'freedom'. And insofar as this means that we are in some sense, and to some degree, free to use one or another empirical classificatory system to characterize our perceptible environment, the suggestion is plausible. It seems correct to say that the perceptual judgment 'this is red' involves an element of 'freedom' insofar as the concept of red is just one among many possible concepts and, furthermore, a concept within one but not the only classificatory system of color-concepts, whose application in the present case might be warranted. But a problem arises, as McDowell points out, if we start to think that this element of 'freedom' in empirical thinking is 'total', i.e., if it's not constrained in any sense by anything other than what is conceptual:

> … if our freedom in empirical thinking is total, in particular if it is not constrained from outside the conceptual sphere, that can seem to threaten the very possibility that judgements of experience might be grounded in a way that relates them to a reality external to thought. And surely there must be such grounding if experience is to be a source of knowledge, and more generally, if the bearing of empirical judgements on reality is to be intelligibly in place in our picture at all. … What we wanted to conceive as exercises of concepts threaten to degenerate into moves in a self-contained game. (McDowell, 1996, p. 5)

It is precisely as a response to this worry, McDowell contends, that the tendency to introduce an element of 'Given' arises. In order to account for the external 'constraint' from outside of the conceptual sphere (in order to ensure that the 'freedom' in empirical thinking is not total), one is led to introduce, alongside one's conceptual scheme, an element of 'Given' which is conceived simply as non-conceptual bits of experiential intake, mere impingements on our senses, supposedly providing a ground-level foundation for acquiring and justifying empirical beliefs. The thought seems to be that we need external constraint — we need something which brings about that certain concepts are the right concepts to use; something that makes a perceptual judgment or belief factually accurate rather than false. Some sort of external constraint must have a bearing on which concepts we (should) employ, when, and why. In the Kantian terminology we have been considering (in Chapter 3.4.), the present demand is tantamount to the requirement that our concepts have an 'objective reality' — that concepts can be used to identify and classify perceived objects within our judgments about them so as to afford any consideration of correctness or incorrectness regarding what is being judged.[24] And so, of course,

[24] A critical disagreement worth noting between Kant and Dretske on the one hand and McDowell on the other is exactly how the modal phrase 'concepts *can* be used to identify perceived objects' gets specified philosophically. As we shall shortly see, McDowell, unlike Kant, will insist that concepts not only can but already do get used within human perceptual experience. This assumption will lead McDowell to disregard what Kant was insisting on with his example of having a 'mere intuition' of a house as opposed to seeing some object and classifying it as a house.

empirical belief acquisition cannot merely be a self-contained game in which we're playing with concepts we happen to possess. McDowell puts the point as follows:

> The idea [behind introducing the 'Given'] is that when we have exhausted all the available moves within the space of concepts, all the available moves from one conceptually organized item to another, there is still one more step we can take: namely, pointing to something that is simply received in experience. It can only be pointing, because *ex hypothesi* this last move in a justification comes after we have exhausted the possibilities of tracing grounds from one conceptually organized, and so articulable, item to another. (McDowell, 1996, p. 6)

The question immediately raised, however, is whether this postulated 'Given', these impingements or non-conceptual impacts on our senses, could perform the task for which they were introduced in the first place. What was desired was something that could, and sometimes would, serve to justify our empirical beliefs, something that would constrain our choice of conceptual schemes and specific concepts within them; but it seems we end up with is some (physical, or, say, optical, neurological, etc.) event that by definition stands outside the scope of anything that can provide any support or ground for any empirical belief — simply because an event of this sort cannot justify anything, for it, by definition, isn't the sort of thing that can introduce any normative constraint on our use of concepts.

Here a kind of "oscillation" appears. Once we realize that the 'Given' cannot execute the constraining role for which it was introduced, we recoil back again into the realm of concepts and try to articulate a conception of empirical knowledge without any appeal to anything non-conceptual or 'merely physical'. As McDowell suggests, this acceptance of a 'self-contained game' by some philosophers as the only possible way in which empirical knowledge can be understood. Donald Davidson, for example, suggests that since experience can be nothing other than these non-conceptual impingements on our senses, and since these cannot have any

bearing upon the justificatory status of our empirical beliefs; he readily grants that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" (Davidson, 1986, p. 310). Other philosophers, finding it unacceptable to hold such a coherentist view, try to articulate some form of foundationalism, proposing to specify an acceptable, but, at the end of the day, a mythical notion of 'Given'. According to McDowell, this is simply the "pressure to recoil back into appealing to the Given, only to see all over again that it cannot help" (McDowell, 1996, p. 9). It is this seesaw, this oscillation between two problematic positions, McDowell wants us to dismount. Let us consider one of his first attempts to do so.

4.1 McDowell's proposed solution

McDowell's (1996) proposal is that we can dismount from the seesaw, the problematic oscillation between those two unsatisfactory views about human perception, if we can make proper sense of the Kantian conception of empirical knowledge as a product of a co-operation between sensibility and understanding. This idea of co-operation, according to McDowell, is particularly praiseworthy because it offers a picture of human perception within which it is acknowledged both that our empirical knowledge or belief acquisition has an aspect of freedom pertaining to our use of concepts; and that of course, insofar as empirical knowledge is knowledge of anything, we need a perceptual access to—or a constraint provided by—whatever is known perceptually:

> If our activity in empirical thought and judgement is to be recognizable as bearing on reality at all, there must be external constraint. There must be a role for receptivity as well as spontaneity, for sensibility as well as understanding. (McDowell, 1996, p. 9)

The suggestion, then, is that we can conceive of such a co-operative activity between sensibility and understanding without falling victim to either side of the problematic dualism only if we can "achieve a firm grip on this thought: receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation" between sensibility and understanding (McDowell, 1996, p. 9).[25] In order to account for the possibility of external constraint, which is demanded of our experience of the world, we must give up the idea of 'experience' as merely providing us with non-conceptual bits of Given, these merely sensory impingements upon which and as a result of which we can then bring our concepts to bear within empirical judgments. Rather, we ought to make sense of the idea that

> [t]he relevant conceptual capacities are drawn on *in* receptivity. … It is not that they are exercised *on* an extra-conceptual deliverance of receptivity. We should understand what Kant calls "intuition"—experiential intake—not as a bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual content. In experience one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge. (McDowell, 1996, p. 9)

Now it appears that if what we 'take in' in experience and what we judge in empirical judgments have this sortal parallelism (both are structured like 'that …' clauses), there must be a corresponding parallelism between the structure of experience and judgment, between the contribution of sensibility and of understanding — and this is precisely the consequence McDowell intends to draw. If there is no strict separability between the contributions of understanding and

[25] It is doubtful whether the Kantian terms 'receptivity' and 'spontaneity' are nouns which characterize exclusively aspects of sensibility and understanding respectively in their original use, yet McDowell treats them so. He reformulates the Kantian thought, for example, by rephrasing it as the thought "that empirical knowledge results from a co-operation between receptivity and spontaneity. (Here 'spontaneity' can be simply a label for the involvement of conceptual capacities)" (McDowell, 1996, p. 9). His identification of notions of 'spontaneity', 'understanding' and 'the involvement of conceptual capacities' will prove to be deeply problematic for a proper understanding of Kant's account of perception because ex hypothesi it implies that whatever involves conceptual capacities per force belongs to understanding and can be characterized by 'spontaneity'.

sensibility (and if want to avoid the dualism and the see-saw, there better not be), then, since what characterizes the products of the understanding is judgment,[26] and since judgments have conceptual or propositional content, then the content of perceptual experience must be conceptual as well, i.e., the structure of empirical intuitions must also be judgmental.[27]

Now what does this mean? — What should we make of the suggestion that the contribution of our faculty of sensibility to the co-operation which affords empirical belief acquisition isn't even notionally separable from the contribution that our understanding makes because sensibility, just like its counterpart, "already has" conceptual content? To be sure, that there is *at least* a notionally separable difference between what sensibility and what understanding contribute to empirical knowledge is a necessary condition for the very formulation of McDowell's suggestion. He himself states that "there must be a role for receptivity *as well as* spontaneity, for sensibility *as well as* understanding" (McDowell, 1996, p. 9; my emphases). So perhaps more charitably, we might take him to suggest not that sensibility and understanding are 'not even notionally separable', but that they, or their respective contributions to empirical belief acquisition, are merely notionally distinguishable,

[26] Strictly speaking, it is not clear why one should allocate what one 'judges' to what characterizes understanding as opposed to what one 'sees' to what characterizes sensibility. But this seems to be what McDowell does, perhaps implicitly, when he says that *that-things-are-thus-and-so* is the sort of thing one can both see and judge (McDowell 1996, p. 9). As we have seen above, according to Kant, what one 'takes in' in experience (sensory intuitions) and that through the application of which one judges or acquires beliefs (by using concepts) are components within acts of judgment, without either of which object-directedness (accurate or not) wouldn't be even possible. I shall set aside this complication to sustain my adoption of McDowell's terminology for the specification of the present philosophical difficulty.

[27] In *Mind and World* (1996) McDowell treats experience's having conceptual content as tantamount to its having propositional content. Later he revises this view, e.g., McDowell (2009) proposes that perceptual experience, *as such,* doesn't have propositional content, but that the content of perception (whatever its kind), can be actualized, propositionally, in judgment. Insofar as the requirement of this kind of strict parallelism between empirical intuitions and potential perceptual judgments stands, the revision is inessential for my critical purposes. In *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge* (2011), McDowell still maintains that "[w]hen one sees something to be so, one is in a perceptual state in which its being so is visually *there* for one, so that one has a conclusive warrant for a corresponding belief" (p. 31).

i.e., that sense can be made of their distinction only within a theoretical and abstractive attempt to understand the structure of human perception whereas actually, as a matter of fact, such separation or distinctness between these human faculties is nowhere to be found. Our understanding (qua our capacity to use concepts) does not act upon an antecedently and independently provided multitude of (merely) sensory elements given by our sensibility. Rather, the conceptual activity which characterizes generically the acts of the understanding also characterizes, perhaps not so generically, the products of sensibility, i.e., sensory intuitions. This is why in experience we can see, just like in judgment we can judge, that things are thus-and-so. However, from the fact that sensibility and understanding do not admit of such self-standing intelligibility or separability, it doesn't follow that experience should be conceived, just like judgment, as the sort of thing in which one can take in that things are thus-and-so.

Recall McDowell's aim to dismount a see-saw: we want to escape from a predicament in which we oscillate between falling prey to a mythical conception of the Given or just making do with a purely coherentist account in which our conception of empirical thinking starts to look like a self-contained game, admitting of no external constraint whatsoever. A genuine escape from this predicament, McDowell suggests, "would require that we avoid the Myth of the Given without renouncing the claim that experience is a rational constraint on thinking" (McDowell, 1996, p. 18). His positive suggestion is that we should conceive of experience, or empirical intuitions, as occurrences or states which already have conceptual content; otherwise, we end up falling to the 'Given' side of the problematic dualism. And we can dismount the see-saw, "if we can recognize that the world's impressions on our senses are already possessed of conceptual content"

(McDowell, 1996, p. 18). When we ask what it is for experiences to be possessed of conceptual content, his answer is that the concepts that are normally employed in judgment are employed, in some structurally similar way, in one's very experience, and hence through such conceptual (as opposed to merely sensory, or 'mythical') experience, one can take in that things are thus and so:

> *That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement: it becomes the content of a judgement if the subject decides to take the experience at face value. So it is conceptual content. But *that things are thus and so* is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are. Thus the idea of conceptually structured operations of receptivity puts us in a position to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality. Experience enables the layout of reality itself to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks. (McDowell, 1996, p. 26)

Now, 'that things are thus and so' is something that can, for example, be said of or claimed about what one is now experiencing or has previously experienced. In such cases, the locution 'see (or saw) that something is (or was) so-and-so' is normally meant to convey the fact that what is claimed ('that something is so-and-so') by using the locution '*see* that' (as opposed 'being told that' or 'having read in a book that', etc.) is a belief probably acquired in part by some visual, or otherwise perceptual, experience of the 'something' in question or some perceptible aspect thereof. Moreover, when we normally employ the terminology of epistemic seeing to claim something about the content and character of our ambient environment, our use of the 'that something is thus-and-so' terminology serves to specify what we believe about or what we judge of, what we have seen (or heard, etc.). Earlier, we characterized such seeing or perceiving as (to speak with Dretske) 'non-epistemic seeing'. It is therefore absurd to suggest that we must conceive human experience as some sort of exercise in which we take in that things are thus and so. Such apparent absurdity might recede from view, McDowell would suggest, if we consider his

proposal against the background of his contention that if we do not so conceive experience, we wind up back on the seesaw we have been trying to dismount. However, there is no reason to think that we end up on either horn of that dilemma within Kant's and Dretske's accounts of perception, accounts in which no such characterization of experience, exclusively in terms of epistemic seeing, is called for. Kant has offered us sufficient reason to think that of course, our experience of tables and chairs, objects and events in our surroundings, do not just happen to us, that such experience requires sub-personal functions of sensory synthesis and integration, and so some cognitive activity is necessary in order to qualify as an experience of things. But from the admission that sensory intuitions aren't merely 'non-conceptual' impingements on our senses, we are not led further to admit that therefore, they are the sort of thing in which we take in what we might otherwise judge, that in perception, the layout of reality itself 'exerts a rational influence' on subjects.

Another ambiguity, I believe, allows McDowell's proposal to seem less absurd than it really is. This is apparent in his use of the term 'conceptual'. McDowell keeps emphasizing that the 'conceptual' must extend to the entirety of what is perceived. Here we ought to ask, 'conceptual' in what sense? In *Mind and World* (1996), McDowell states that "[i]t is essential to conceptual capacities, in the demanding sense, that they can be exploited in active thinking, thinking that is open to reflection about its own rational credentials. When I say the content of experience is conceptual, that is what I mean by 'conceptual'" (p. 47). By so restricting the use of 'conceptual' exclusively to activities that afford (at least potential) epistemic evaluation and assessment, one is led to rule out, by fiat, any possible conceptual albeit non-epistemic aspect of human perception, as in Kant's account of sub-personal cognitive functions. This leads to identifying the term 'conceptual' with the

term ‘epistemic’.[28] Consider McDowell’s later sketch of what he takes to be a Sellarsian account of perception. Here he asserts that “just by virtue of being a conceptual episode, such a [visual] episode ‘contains’ a claim about the environment” (McDowell, 1998, p. 451). Now what contains a claim does eo ipso have an epistemic status because it may or may not be correctly executed. But as we have seen in Kant's account of perception, what is conceptual is not, qua conceptual, epistemic. In similar fashion, McDowell says that “Visual experiences ‘make’ or ‘contain’ claims in that they are conceptual episodes, actualizations of conceptual capacities, and as such are to be understood on the model of linguistic performances in which claims are literally made” (McDowell, 1998, p. 438). Again, his assimilation and identification of ‘epistemic’ with ‘conceptual’ is apparent. Hence it is not puzzling, I submit, why McDowell continually neglects the crucial difference between simply seeing$_n$ something and seeing$_e$, of something, that it is thus-and-so. Because reflection on these differences soon reveals the difference between distinct kinds of normativities—between cognitive and epistemic—whose distinctness McDowell seeks to ignore and to conflate into one, single kind normativity, supposedly characterizing both sensibility and understanding.

Judgment, to put it in information-theoretic terms, is an achievement in which both analog and digital, both sensory and conceptual, factors are present as components through the relation of which judgments can be made (and are even possible to make). Kant's and Dretske's views can be easily aligned by noting that Kant’s cognitive ‘judgments’ serve to extract information to form (e.g.) perceptual beliefs about perceived particulars in our surroundings. It is apt here to recall Kant’s caution that “truth and illusion are not in the object insofar as it is intuited, but are in

[28] Or, at least, restricting them to the same domain (of self-consciousness).

the judgment made about the object insofar as it is thought" (*KdrV* A293/B350); that any epistemic status, any possibility of truth-evaluation, requires the co-operation of sensibility and understanding. Thus: "truth and error … are to be found only in the judgment, i.e., only in the relation of the object to our understanding" (*KdrV* A293/B350). We have seen, moreover, Kant's contrast between having a 'mere intuition' of a house (simply seeing$_n$ a house) without possessing, and, a fortiori not using the concept 'house'; with having an intuition of a house that has been brought under the subject-term of a perceptual judgment that 'it (the intuited particular) is a house', resulting from a proper co-operation between sensibility (the intuition of the house) and the understanding (the concept 'house', now used to judge that this perceived particular is a house) in an act of epistemic seeing or apperceptive consciousness. The cognitive extraction, integration and use of analog information so as to provide an occasion for the episodic perceptual recognition of particulars within spatio-temporal contexts is a necessary condition for our having anything recognizable as 'experience' in which middle sized dry goods are on view for us. It is therefore seriously misleading to conceive experience as McDowell does (1996, pp. xii-xiii), as 'returning' or 'delivering' verdicts. Verdicts can be, ex hypothesi, true or false, accurate or inaccurate, justified or not — they therefore have, in our terminology, an epistemic status, they are subject to truth-evaluation. Verdicts are expressions of "postures" or "stances", as McDowell puts it, that are correctly or incorrectly adopted according to whether or not the world is as they purport it to be. As we have seen with Kant above (in Chapter 3.2), truth and falsity lies not in the object insofar as it is intuited but in the judgment insofar as the object is thought. The notion of 'experience', understood in Kant's terms qua sensibility in abstraction from understanding, as the faculty through which we enjoy sensory intuitions, doesn't

provide us with items which we can conceive as verdicts — i.e., as attitudes or stances that are correctly or incorrectly adapted according to whether or not the world is as they purport to be. They do not, and cannot have, as 'mere intuitions' any aspect of 'adoption', or 'affirmation', or 'verdict' so as to be regarded as making any sort of claim which is normative in the sense of being subject to truth-evaluation. Yet, this doesn't mean (and it's important that it does not mean) that one cannot speak of any kind of normativity within sensibility. We have seen in Chapter 3.3 above that what our sensibility provides us with is subject to a kind of normativity insofar as it draws upon cognitive (although sub-personal) activity on the part of the subject so as to afford any ongoing visual field within which sufficiently stable and localizable objects are perceptible. This kind of normativity doesn't imply that in experience, we "take in that things are thus and so". That things are thus-and-so is something that we judge, not something that we simply see. Insensitivity to the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic seeing allows McDowell to put forward the view that in experience we take in that which is the case in conjunction with the view that of course experience is something through which we have the world perceptually in view. By assimilating epistemic and non-epistemic seeing, McDowell claims that experience, as such, is conceptual through and through. Furthermore, McDowell contends that if we keep in mind the dualism we're trying to avoid, we shall see that such conception of experience is philosophically compulsory. This claim, however, is false. It is the imposition of an absurdity under the pretense of philosophical necessity. When we require, of experience itself, that within it the layout of reality imposes itself on a subject in propositional or conceptual form, as 'a rational influence', we end up assimilating any and every act of seeing to epistemic seeing,

thereby neglecting the non-epistemic (or the merely intuitional) aspect of human perception and sensibility.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I have tried, in this thesis, to carefully separate two aspects of human perception in order to argue for an account of perceptual knowledge which does justice both to our sentience and to our sapience. This required me to distinguish between two distinct kinds of normativities that pertain to human perception, understood generically. I therefore distinguished, following Kant and Dretske, epistemic and non-epistemic seeing. Keeping this distinction in clear view, I argued, is vital for several epistemological purposes and for avoiding misconceived accounts of human perceptual knowledge. I shall conclude by reminding the reader several of these. First, keeping apart our seeing_n things distinct from what judge of things when we see_e them allows us to see why changes in our worldview and conceptual schemes do *not* constitute changes within the world in which we perceive things. Since epistemic seeing involves use of empirical concepts within acts of perceptual judgment and since our coming to have perceptually grounded beliefs requires use of empirical concepts which are subject to assessment, revision, and even radical change; what we see_e to be the case can be subject to a corresponding shift. Once we keep distinct the issue of our simply seeing_n things from the issue of what we judge of things, we see that too much has been made, famously by the neo-positivists such as Hanson and Kuhn, of the implications of radical shifts in our scientific worldview. No matter how radically we may differ in our beliefs and understanding of the empirical world, we are nevertheless in a common predicament insofar as we see_n things around us, receive sensory information from our surroundings, enjoy empirical intuitions. As in

Kant's example of the extremely ignorant subject who has no concept of a 'house' (or any suitably related concept), such a person can nevertheless see houses so as to be able to raise questions about, say, what they are or what purpose they serve. We are thus able see, in Dretske's terms, that "[t]otal ignorance is not a sufficient condition for total blindness" (Dretske, 1969, p. 17).

A second philosophical use to which our central distinction can be put, which merits explicit recognition, is that distinguishing non-epistemic and epistemic seeing allows us to respect Kant's (and, much later, Frege's) warning about keeping apart issues of process from issues of validity. Let me expand upon this. Regarding the concern of his epistemology, Kant carefully distinguishes considerations regarding actual empirical processes (*quid facti*) from issues that concern validity (*quid juris*) (*KdrV* A84/B116). The former, he says, helps us recognize processes through which we enjoy certain cognitive states and how we use certain concepts. Yet he is emphatic that such considerations of the kind of normativity which pertain to sensory receptivity must be kept apart from issues of validity—considerations on how we *ought* to use our concepts in judging—which are central to an epistemology which is concerned with the 'legitimacy', the justificatory status, of our judgments and hence with the epistemic kind of normativity.[29] Much later, Frege re-emphasizes this point with his critique of 'psychologism' — which is his designation of the views that mistake or confuse issues of validity and issues of process (Frege, 1894, 1916). It was argued above that within human perception, things can go wrong in two quite

[29] See *KdrV* (A84-89/B116-122). The distinction between Kant's *quid facti* and *quir juris* corresponds to his 'subjective' and 'objective' deductions (*KdrV* A*xvii*). As part of the former, Kant examines how we can experience, discriminate, or come to have perceptual beliefs about particulars. And so the issues of sensory synthesis and integration that we have paid attention above, in which Kant's concern with non-epistemic seeing is pervasive, are issues of process and hence belong to Kant's 'subjective deduction' whereas his account of perceptual judgment concerns issues of validity and hence is the proper context that epistemic seeing belongs.

distinct ways. The labels we use for these distinct failures, as my title suggests, are ‘blindness’ and ‘ignorance’. One of my primary aims was to keep these two kinds of failures distinct. As a result of one of them, we commonly seek an ophthalmologist to get our eyes checked, whereas as a result of the other we raise questions regarding the justificatory status of our purported beliefs and seek to revise or correct them as needed to make better sense of what we’re dealing with. This is why Kant’s label ‘responsibility’ is very fitting as a proper characterization of our faculty of judgment and not of sensibility. This point also drives Kant’s stress that truth and illusion are in the judgment made about the object insofar as it is thought, not in the object as it is intuited. It is for this reason vitally inaccurate to conceive, as McDowell does, empirical intuitions or perceptual experiences as ‘returning’ or ‘delivering’ verdicts regarding the ‘layout’ of some perceived environment, an environment which ‘rationally influences’ the subject it includes. The oxymoronic character of the very phrase ‘rational influence’ is apparent in light of Kant’s (and Frege’s) critique of ‘psychologism’.

Another respect in which Kant and Dretske agree is that they both affirm what today gets called ‘externalism regarding cognitive justification’. They both stress that our grounds for believing our perceptually grounded beliefs may be sufficiently justificatory without it being necessary that certain conditions that must hold on any occasion of acquiring belief are known, actually, to hold. The knowledge of the present state of a particular channel of information isn’t a necessary condition for knowing what that particular channel of information enables one to know or be informed about. Otherwise, my coming to know, say, that the water in my kettle is boiling, by seeing_e that it is boiling, would require me to also know that my sensory channels through which I can see the water and the kettle are functioning properly,

that the ambient conditions are optimal for veridical perception, and so on. But I am not, in such contexts, required to confirm or affirm these things in order to make a perceptually grounded (and sufficiently grounded) judgment regarding the boiling of some water.[30]

It is important, however, to keep in mind that none of this implies that no sense can be made of any kind of error which pertain to our senses (qua our senses). It just means that such errors are tokens of a different sort than those which pertain to our empirical judgments. It is worth noticing that keeping the mentioned kinds errors apart turns out to be particularly difficult when it comes to examples of perceptual knowledge that are the most beloved of philosophers interested in perception, examples such as seeing that some object is blue, or cubical, or manifests some such visibly-obvious property. Imagine some adult saying to you, 'this wall is red' while pointing to a red wall in a room in which you start to wonder, unsurprisingly, what mischief this person is up to by expressing this obvious piece of information. Why would such a puzzlement be obviously appropriate on your part? Because you are perhaps 'implicitly assuming' that she, just like you, can see_n the red wall perfectly and also recognize, since any kind of drug influence or some such thing is out of question, that not only is there a visible wall but a visibly *red* wall right there. When we ponder enough on such a case, we quickly realize that in normal linguistic practices in which demonstrative terms (such as 'this-wall', 'that-object') are used, they are used (for what their proper, actual function is) to ascribe certain properties to

[30] This is not to say that there can be no occasion whatsoever in which sufficient justification for a perceptual belief requires affirming and checking physiological or environmental conditions. On the contrary, depending on the context in which perceptual belief acquisition occurs, there *may* be reasons (e.g., deceptive lighting, possible drug influence, etc.) to re-assess or withhold our initial judgments. See (Dretske, 1981, pp. 123-34) for a 'relevant alternatives' model of justification according to which what constitutes a *relevant*—as opposed to a merely logically possible—alternative is an issue that is essentially context-bound and domain-specific. See Thorpe (2006) on why Kant distinguishes between sensibility and understanding, and thus distinguishes between logical and real possibility.

objects — properties which are generally not the sort that can be $seen_e$ to be trivially true by just taking another look at the perceived object. And so if we keep in mind the pragmatics of our actual use of vocabularies that contain such 'seeing-that' locutions, we realize that what we usually see_e to be the case almost always contains a claim other than what can be trivially read-off from what we see_n.[31]

This is why, I believe, Wilfrid Sellars labels the perceptual judgments of the sort that resemble those we actually do make as 'judgments proper' (Sellars, 2002b, p. 420). In a context in which he ponders the structure of perceptually grounded judgments, the generic example of a 'judgment *proper*' is: "This brick with a red and rectangular facing side is too large for the job at hand" (Sellars, 2002b, p. 420). Such judgments contrasts to judgments improper such as 'this is a brick which has a red and rectangular facing surface'.[32] Notice that the latter, 'improper' judgments also contain, or perhaps implicitly assume, that some perceived object exemplifies such-and-such quality, e.g., that this is, indeed, a brick, and that it really has a rectangular facing surface. Such implicit, 'improper' judgments may, on closer inspection, turn out to be ill-formed or inaccurate. Yet it is crucial to appreciate that within the context of a judgment 'proper' in which the judgment concerns the sufficiency of the brick for the purpose at hand, the redness or the actual shape of the facing surface of the brick are scarcely relevant. Dretske makes an important related point when he reminds us that "our acquisition of knowledge by visual means is incremental in character" (Dretske, 1969, 93). When I see that the water is boiling, my perceptual

[31] It may be worth adding that within language games in which we teach linguistically developing children how to use, say, the correct color words; we temporarily drop this convention and do pay attention to what will later become humdrum features of things such as their colors or shapes.
[32] Although Sellars do not use the term 'judgment improper', his usage makes the contrast in question clear.

belief is incremental because it builds upon my background belief that it is water that is boiling. As he explains:

> The statement 'I can see that the *b* is *P'* is neutral with respect to how the percipient acquired the information which he exploits to make an identifying reference to what he sees to be *P*; it is neutral with respect to how he knows that it is a *b* which he sees to be *P*. The identification of the *b* as *b* (or a *b*) can be realized in any manner. I can run extensive investigations on the liquid in front of me, subject it to chemical analysis, and listen to the findings of experts as to its exact nature. … [W]e must be extremely careful not to confuse *seeing that the water is boiling* with *seeing that something is boiling water*. For if we conflate these two achievements, if we treat them as a single achievement described in alternative ways, then we will mistakenly suppose that if someone cannot see that something is boiling water, neither can he see that the water is boiling. And this is simply not true. (Dretske, 1969, pp. 94-5).

This brings up another respect in which Kant and Dretske agree: they both deny the so-called 'K-K principle' according to which for any proposition *P,* a necessary condition of my knowing that *P* is that I know that I know that *P*. Reflection on the incremental nature of human perceptual knowledge and acquisition of empirical beliefs reveals that such a principle cannot be true, at least within the domain of perceptually grounded knowledge. Furthermore, the attention both Kant and Dretske pay to our actual perceptual judgments is apparent in the examples of perception they provide, examples in which we see that the tire of a car is flat, that the water is boiling, that the object over there is a dwelling established for people, etc. Seldom do they speak of our ability to see that some object in front of us is green, which tends to lead philosophers to underestimate, or to disregard altogether, the role judgment plays in any act of epistemic seeing. Incidentally, McDowell exemplifies such a philosopher. He keeps providing examples in which the generic example of knowledge acquired by perception is color recognition. In *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge* (2011)*,* McDowell speaks of "the capacity to know the colors of things by looking at them" (McDowell, 2011, p. 12). He says that "someone who

gives expression to such knowledge by saying, for instance, 'That's green' must be able to vindicate the authority with which she speaks by saying something like 'I can tell a green thing when I see one'" (2011, p. 12). If we recall McDowell's aim of conceiving perceptual experience as a rational influence of the layout of the reality on a subject, it is easy to see why he favors such trivial examples of color perception as generic tokens of perceptual knowledge. Seeing-that-this-is-green seems much easier to assimilate into an act of sensibility (as 'receptivity') than seeing-that-this-red-brick-is-too-large-for-the-job-at-hand. Later he talks about a more down-to-earth example and considers seeing that my neighbor is at home by seeing his car on his driveway. In such a case, McDowell contends that my knowledge that my neighbor "is at home counts as knowledgeable, if it does, because there is a good enough inference from the fact that his car is in his driveway to the conclusion that he is at home" (McDowell, 2011, p. 25). But the properly *perceptual* knowledge or belief in this example is seeing that my neighbor's car is in his driveway, not seeing that-he-is-home. And since McDowell's account of knowledge requires self-consciousness on the part of the subject about the warrant of her perceptual knowledge; the demand that is relevant here, the warrant that the subject should be able to produce, is a warrant for knowing that my neighbor's car is in his driveway, but this is treated by McDowell simply as a 'fact' upon which further inferences are drawn. Why and how did this become a 'fact' is unclear. Presumably, the answer McDowell would give to a demand of such a warrant for *that* (properly perceptual belief) would be similar to the one he suggests in the case of knowing that something is green: I should be able to say 'I can tell my neighbor's car in his driveway when I see it' and this would be the self-consciously accessible warrant that is purported to ground my perceptual knowledge. The layout of reality, as McDowell purports, includes that my neighbor's

car is in his driveway, and thanks to my perceptual, sensible capacities, I have this piece of the layout of reality in view for me. With such dubious moves, I submit, McDowell tries to abnegate the 'responsibility' involved in judgment and tries to make it appear as if sensibility did all the job for us. His insistence "to speak of experience as openness to the layout of reality" requires him to do away with the 'responsibility' involved in acts of perceptual judgment. Only thus is he able to claim that we can have, in perception, the world in view in propositional or conceptual form.

Such are the dangers of disregarding, and several benefits of respecting, the distinction between ignorance and blindness. Both our sapience and our sentience play interdependent and supportive roles within our lives as perceivers and epistemic agents. A plausible epistemology of perception requires, therefore, that sufficient attention be given to both of them. The accounts of Kant and Dretske constitute, I submit, remarkable documents of such an attention. Having in view their cautions and positive suggestions, I have tried to show, allow us to grasp the significance and the epistemological relevance of the issues at hand as well as the potential pitfalls that await us if we refrain from doing so.[33]

[33] Let me end by admitting of a caveat that concerns a shortcoming from which many philosophical texts on perception, including this one, suffer. It is barely worth mentioning that perception is not limited to vision. We do not just see things, but also hear, touch, smell, and feel them. Moreover, it is apparent that these modalities play crucial, interdependent, and mutually supporting roles in our experience and our acquiring of perceptual beliefs. It is therefore important to acknowledge that any account of perception and perceptual knowledge is incomplete insofar as it neglects the intricate involvement of modalities other than vision within human perception and syntheses across modalities as well as within any one modality. However, although I would plead guilty to such a charge of simplification, it does not affect, I submit, the crux of the matter I've been dealing with.

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