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Plum's assertion to be wrongful? I can't think of one. Perhaps an assertion is unwarranted if false, unwarranted if unsupported by the evidence, and not unwarranted otherwise. It's tempting to think that the features in virtue of which she oughtn't have asserted *falsely* that *p* are the features in virtue of which she oughtn't have asserted *without evidence* that *p*. So, it's tempting to think that there's some single set of considerations in light of which something demands that she refrains from asserting the false and asserting without evidence. We have one ground with two conceptually related demands. Further, it's tempting to think of assertion and belief in parallel. If the norms of belief permit belief, they permit asserting that the belief is true. If the norms don't permit the belief, the norms of assertion won't then let you assert what you oughtn't believe. If there's nothing more and nothing less to warranted assertion than what I've suggested, a belief's justification will not involve less than the belief's faultlessly and faithfully representing how things are. Maybe there's not much more to it, either.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Thanks to Robert Howell, Errol Lord, Luke Robinson, Brad Thomson, Steve Sverdlik, and Mark van Roojen for discussing the issues addressed in this chapter. I also want to thank Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen and an anonymous referee for their helpful written comments.

## CHAPTER 7

*Perception, generality, and reasons**Hannah Ginsborg*

In the last two decades there has been much debate about whether the representational content of perceptual experience is conceptual or non-conceptual. Recently, however, some philosophers<sup>1</sup> have challenged the terms of this debate, arguing that one of its most basic assumptions is mistaken. Experience, they claim, does not have representational content at all. As they see it, having a perceptual experience is not to be understood on the model of thought or belief, as a matter of the subject's taking things in the world to be this or that way, or of having this or that feature. Nor is it to be understood on the model of receiving testimony about how things are in the world, as a matter of its being represented to us that things are this or that way. Rather, it is simply a matter of our being presented with things. To have a perceptual experience of an object is to stand in a certain kind of relation to it which makes it available to us to be represented in thought or belief, but which does not itself involve our representing it, or its being represented to us.

Much of the motivation for rejecting the view that experience has representational content springs from a concern to do justice to what is distinctive about perceptual experience in contrast to thought and belief. In particular, perceptual experience seems to be more "primitive" than thought, in that it seems natural to appeal to the character of perceptual experience to explain the possibility of thought about objects rather than the other way around. There is thus a concern that we will deprive perceptual experience of its explanatory role with respect to thought if we think of perceptual experiences as representational states on the model of thoughts and beliefs. This kind of concern has played a role in motivating the view that the content of perceptual experience is non-conceptual rather than conceptual. But on the more radical approach at issue, the distinctive

<sup>1</sup> For example Brewer (2004, 2006, 2008); Campbell (2002); Gupta (2006); Martin (2002, 2004); and Travis (2004).

character of perception can be accommodated only by rejecting the idea that experience has content *überhaupt*. And for at least some defenders of the approach, this is required not only to do justice to the explanatory priority of experience over belief, but also to respect the intuitively appealing idea that perception offers immediate acquaintance with the constituents of reality.

My main aim in this chapter is to consider the implications of this approach for the widely acknowledged idea that perceptual experiences can stand in rational relations to belief. Can we deny that experiences have content, while still doing justice to the kind of reason-giving or justificatory relation which has typically been assumed to hold between perceptual experiences and beliefs? I shall argue that we cannot. Taking as my focus Bill Brewer's attack on what he calls the "content view," and his proposal to replace it with an alternative "object view," I shall argue that perceptual experiences must have content if they are to rationalize beliefs, at least in the sense that has traditionally been invoked in the context of epistemological debates about empirical justification. More constructively, however, I shall go on to suggest a version of the content view which aims to address some of the concerns motivating the challenge raised by Brewer and others. I shall argue that we can construe perceptual experiences as capable of standing in rational relations to thought and belief, hence as having content in the same sense that thoughts and beliefs do, while still respecting the distinctive character of experiences in contrast to thoughts and beliefs.

### 7.1 PROBLEMS FOR THE CONTENT VIEW

In this section I want to look briefly at how Brewer understands the content view and at what he thinks is wrong with it. The "basic idea" of the content view, he says, is that "perceptual experience is to be characterized . . . by its representational content, roughly, by the way it *represents* things as being in the world around the perceiver" (2006: 165). The representational content here, he thinks, is modeled on that of "a person's *thought* about the world around him, as . . . expressed in his linguistic communication with others, and registered by their everyday attitude ascriptions to him" (2006: 166). Specifically, what Brewer calls the "initial model" for content, a model which serves as the basis for the content theorist's understanding of the content of perceptual experience, is a subject's thought, about an object *a* in his environment, that it is *F*. The content theorist arrives at a conception of the content of perceptual experience by modifying or qualifying

this initial model. On the version of the content view which Brewer takes as his target, the initial model is qualified in three respects, two of them corresponding to features of John McDowell's version of the content view, the third corresponding to a feature introduced in Brewer's own, earlier, articulation of the content view.<sup>2</sup> First, unlike that of a thought, the content of a perceptual experience is entertained passively: one finds oneself, in McDowell's terms, saddled with the content that *a* is *F*, as opposed to actively putting that content together oneself. Second, the singular component of the content is an object-dependent demonstrative sense: the content one is saddled with is, for example, that *this* man or *that* table is *F*; a content which depends on the existence of the object demonstrated. Third, the predicative component of the content is also demonstrative and, in Brewer's terms, world-dependent: it is articulated through a doubly demonstrative expression of the form "that is thus," for example "that (man) is thus (in facial expression)."

Now the point of these qualifications is to secure the contrast between experience and thought. To summarize, they specify that experiential content is unlike thought-content in being passively entertained rather than actively put together, and in being demonstrative and thus world-dependent both with regard to the object perceived and to the features which it is perceived to have. Is this specification sufficient to do justice to the distinctive character of experience in contrast to thought and belief? Brewer thinks not. The qualifications to the initial model, as he sees it, are "too little too late" (2006: 166), since that model retains two objectionable features which vitiate any attempt to modify it so as to capture the content of perceptual experience. The first feature is that content, on the initial model, allows of falsity, so that perceptions can be misleading. While this is often taken to be an advantage of the content view, Brewer argues that it is in fact a liability: truth and falsity should be understood as belonging only to one's *thought* about a particular object out there, not to one's perception of it.

The second, and, as it turns out, more fundamental of the two features, is that content on the initial model involves generality. On the initial model, "a particular object, *a*, is thought to be a *specific general way*, *F*, which such objects may be and which infinitely many qualitatively distinct objects are" (Brewer 2006: 173). This feature of the model, according to Brewer, requires the content view to construe perception as involving two kinds of selection or abstraction. Suppose, to take Brewer's example, that you are perceiving a

<sup>2</sup> McDowell (1994b); Brewer (1999).

particular red football. Your perception “must begin by making a selection” from among the various dimensions in which different such things can vary, for example selecting the color and shape of the ball from among a range of dimensions which also includes its weight, age, and cost. Second, and more importantly, it must select a determinate general way in which the ball is represented as being along each of the already selected dimensions, so that the ball is represented, say, as having a determinate shape and color. Such a determinate way the object is represented as being is general in that a range of objects might be that same way. Your perception thus classifies or categorizes the object by representing it as having something in common with other actual or possible objects.

According to Brewer, this is objectionable: “[h]owever automatic, or natural, such general classification may be, it still constitutes an unwarranted intrusion of conceptual thought about the world presented in perception into the [content] theorist’s account of the most basic nature of perception itself” (2006: 174). Brewer suggests two reasons why this is so. One is that, in allowing perception to involve the exercise of abstract general thought, the content view deprives experience of any role in explaining the possibility of abstract thought. As Brewer puts it: “Perception itself constitutes the fundamental ground for the very possibility of any such abstract general thought about the physical world subjectively presented in it” (2006: 174). This objection is similar to John Campbell’s argument for favoring what he calls the relational view of experience over the representational view. Campbell puts it like this: “we cannot view experience of objects as a way of grasping thoughts about objects. Experience of objects has to be something more primitive than the ability to think about objects, in terms of which the ability to think about objects can be explained” (2002: 122). The other reason is that the generality which the content view ascribes to perception prevents it from doing justice to the idea that experience consists in openness to the objects in the physical world. For Brewer, the content theorist’s account of perceptual experience “trades direct openness to the elements of physical reality for some intellectual act of classification or categorization. As a result [the content view] loses all right to the idea that it is the actual physical objects before her which are subjectively presented in a person’s perception, rather than any of the equally *truth-conducive* possible surrogates” (2006: 174). So the content view fails to accommodate the intuitively appealing idea that what constitutes the character of perception is the actual objects we perceive, as opposed to the general features which we represent those objects as having.

## 7.2 A PROBLEM FOR THE OBJECT VIEW

We have seen some considerations motivating the rejection of the content view. What can be said in its defense? It is often thought that a major motivation for the view is the need to account for perceptual illusions, since on the face of it these would seem to consist in experiences which represent the world as being otherwise than it actually is. Accordingly, Brewer and other philosophers attacking the view have devoted considerable attention to showing how we can make sense of illusion without invoking representational content.<sup>3</sup> But I am concerned with another source of motivation which has received less attention, at least in the context of this debate. This is the idea that a satisfactory account of perceptual experience should make sense of how perceptual experiences can stand in rational or justificatory relations to belief and judgment: how, in particular, our beliefs and judgments can be rationally intelligible in the light of our perceptions. This demand has been emphasized by John McDowell in his defense of the view that the content of perception is conceptual, and indeed by Brewer himself in earlier work defending the conceptualist position.<sup>4</sup> It has also been widely accepted by non-conceptualist critics of McDowell, who have typically chosen not to reject the demand, but rather to argue that it can be satisfied even on a non-conceptualist construal of experiential content. We would expect, then, that philosophers who reject the view that experience has content, and specifically who endorse a position like Brewer’s “object view,” would also want their position to satisfy this demand. But, on the face of it, the demand seems to require that we ascribe some kind of representational content to perceptual experience and, in particular, content with the kind of generality which Brewer finds objectionable. For on a certain natural line of thought, perception of an object cannot rationalize a belief, that is, make it rationally intelligible, unless it presents the object as being a certain way, that is, as having a certain general property or feature.

To get this line of thought into focus, let us begin with an example. Suppose that you are approaching your house, see a package on the front porch, and form the belief that the books you ordered have arrived. Does your perception make rationally intelligible your belief that the books have arrived? In other words, is it plausible, in the light of your having that

<sup>3</sup> See for example Travis (2004) and Brewer (2008). Brewer describes this as the “obvious challenge” facing the object view (2004: 70).

<sup>4</sup> See in particular Brewer (1999).

perception, to suppose that your belief was formed through a rational process? If we assume that in seeing the package you see it *as* a package, and more specifically see it *to be* a package,<sup>5</sup> then the answer, albeit with some qualifications, would appear to be yes. Assuming the right background of beliefs, for example that you ordered books, that they are due to arrive around now, that no other deliveries are on the way, and so on, then it does seem as though, when you see the package on the porch, it is rational for you to form the belief that your books have arrived. Your perception, as I shall put it for short, “rationalizes” your belief. But on the object view as Brewer understands it, your seeing the package as a package or taking it to be a package is not part of your perception proper, but rather a part of what he calls your “classificatory conceptual engagement” with the package. So if your perception rationalizes your belief it cannot be in virtue of your seeing the package as a package. What plays the justificatory role must be something more basic: that is, the mere fact of the package’s being present to you perceptually, regardless of what you see it as being or take it to be.

On the face of it, though, your merely seeing the package does not seem to be the kind of thing which could rationalize the belief in question. For suppose that, on seeing the package, you take it to be, not a package, but rather a patch of sunlight or a pile of newspapers; or that you merely register its presence without taking it to be anything in particular at all. Even if your perception causes you to form the belief that your books have arrived, say by an unconscious process of association, there does not seem to be any ground for supposing that the process of belief formation counts as rational in the light of your perception. On the contrary, there seems to be something paradigmatically non-rational about the formation of your belief under those circumstances. Your belief seems on the face of it to be no more rational than if it had just popped into your head as you were approaching your house without your having seen the package at all.

Now Brewer does not say explicitly that perception on the object view stands in a rational relation to belief. But he does say that perception *grounds* belief: “the course of perceptual experience . . . provide[s] the subject with the grounds for her . . . beliefs about the world . . . not by serving up any fully formed content . . . but, rather, by presenting her directly with the actual constituents of the physical world themselves” (2006: 178). And it seems reasonable to understand the “grounding” here as rational grounding of the kind which figures in the demand that perceptions rationalize beliefs.

<sup>5</sup> While I argue that the latter is required if perception is to rationalize belief (Ginsborg 2006c), the distinction does not matter for present purposes.

The question raised by our example, then, is how the direct presentation of the package can, on its own, provide rational grounds for believing that your books have arrived. A natural answer is that while it cannot provide such grounds directly, it can provide grounds for more basic beliefs which ascribe properties to the package. Assuming that the package is not disguised in some way, and more specifically that it is visibly package-like – brown and rectangular, say – presentation of the package can rationally ground the belief that there is a package in front of you, or, at the very least, that there is something brown and rectangular in front of you: beliefs which can in turn rationally ground the belief that your books have arrived. In the example where, as I put it, you “see the package as a patch of sunlight,” but still form the belief that your books have arrived, the failure of rationality does not indicate that your perception did not provide rational grounds for any beliefs at all. Your perception did provide rational grounds for the belief, say, that there was a package in front of you. Your failure of rationality lay in your having come to believe that your books had arrived without the mediation of that more basic belief.

Let us consider, then, how seeing a package in front of you might provide you with rational grounds for believing that there is a package in front of you. A possible answer is suggested by Brewer’s claim that perception presents its objects in a way which makes “experientially accessible” the perceptible properties which they actually have. Brewer makes this claim in the context of a discussion of the Müller-Lyer illusion. Contrary to the position that would presumably be held by adherents of the content view, namely that perceptual experience presents the lines in the diagram as unequal, Brewer holds that it presents “the very lines out there, distributed in space as they actually are” (2004: 70). Their identity in length is thus “made experientially accessible to the normal subject” (2004: 70). The subject feels an inclination to judge that the lines are unequal in length, but the identity in length is still a “perceptible feature in part constitutive of normal subjects’ experience of them” (2004: 71). This is indicated both by normal subjects’ capacity to point to the endpoints of the lines, and the fact that if the misleading arrow-heads and -tails are gradually removed, what happens is not that the subject experiences the lines changing in length, but rather that the identity in length “becomes gradually more obvious” (2004: 71). Now the Müller-Lyer illusion is of course a special case, but the point can be generalized to normal perception. When you see the package, your experience might be said to present the very package out there, colored and shaped as it actually is. Its properties of being brown and rectangular, and, we might also suppose, its functional character of being a package, are

thus experientially accessible to you, allowing the experience which makes them accessible to rationalize the belief that there is a package, or at least something brown and rectangular, in front of you.

But what does it mean to say that the properties are “experientially accessible”? It cannot mean that the package is presented *as* brown and rectangular and *as* a package, so that its possession of these features is actually recognized within the subject’s perceptual experience. For this is precisely what Brewer wants to deny. So it must mean something weaker, something which is, in particular, compatible with the claim that identity in length is “experientially accessible” in the Müller-Lyer illusion even though, intuitively, we represent the lines as unequal in length. But what this seems to amount to in the Müller-Lyer case is just that we are capable, under appropriate circumstances, of coming to represent the lines as having the property of identity in length: for example, we can come to represent them as identical in length if the misleading arrow-heads and -tails are removed. By the same token, the color, shape, and functional kind of the package are experientially accessible in this weaker sense if the package has them, and if we are capable of coming to see that it has them. And saying that they are experientially accessible in this sense does not seem to add anything to the claim that the package presented to us is in fact brown, rectangular, and a package, since these are features of a kind which we can, typically, come to see things as having.<sup>6</sup> So it does not help with the question of how having a particular brown, rectangular package perceptually presented to us can rationalize the belief that it has those properties of being brown, being rectangular, and being a package.

Another answer is suggested by Brewer’s appeal to what he calls “visually relevant similarities” to account for perceptual illusion (2008: 171ff.). Even though the Müller-Lyer diagram makes experientially accessible the equality of the lines, its being visually similar to paradigmatic diagrams of unequal lines may either intelligibly lead us to take the lines to be unequal, or, in the case where we are not deceived, to “notice the intelligible applicability” of the concept of inequality to the lines (2008: 176). Again, the point can be generalized to ordinary perception: in the straightforward case where you take the package to be a package, the visual similarity of the package to paradigm packages makes intelligible your taking it to be a package. If intelligibility here means “rational intelligibility,” then the

<sup>6</sup> While there may be a question about how to draw the line between properties which things can and cannot be perceived to have, I am assuming that we can perceive something to be brown, rectangular, and a package, but not, say, to have been seen by Gustave Flaubert on a Wednesday afternoon.

suggestion is that the similarity of the package to paradigm cases of packages might rationalize your forming the belief that it is a package. Here again, though, it is not clear how the similarity is supposed to figure in your perceptual experience. It cannot be that your perceptual experience proper represents the package *as* similar to paradigm cases of packages, since similarity to paradigm packages is no less a general property than color, shape, or packagehood themselves. But the only alternative would seem to be that the package is in fact similar to paradigm packages, where that similarity might or might not become salient to a given perceiver in a given context. And while that might make it possible to understand why, as a matter of psychological fact, your perception of the package leads you to believe that the package is a package, it does not help with the question of how your perception can make your belief “rationally intelligible” in the sense at issue.

### 7.3 CAN STATES WITHOUT CONTENT RATIONALIZE BELIEFS?

I have been arguing that we cannot make sense of a perception as rationalizing a belief unless we take the perception to represent its object *as* having some general feature or other, and hence as involving generality in just the way that Brewer finds objectionable. But I might be accused here of relying uncritically on the claim, defended most prominently by McDowell, that representational states must have conceptual content in order to rationalize beliefs. Philosophers on both sides of the debate about non-conceptual content have challenged this claim, arguing that perceptual states can rationalize beliefs even if their content is non-conceptual. That might seem to open a route to the more radical view that perceptual states can rationalize beliefs without having representational content at all.

Consider, for example, Peacocke’s defense of the view that states with non-conceptual content can have rational bearing on beliefs. For McDowell, such rational bearing requires that we be able both to “scrutinize” the relations between experience and belief, and to “articulate” the reasons which experience supplies for belief. Peacocke accepts this point, but maintains, against McDowell, that these conditions can be satisfied even if the content of experience is non-conceptual. Regarding the demand for rational scrutiny, he points out that “a thinker can ask ‘Is something’s looking that way a reason for judging that it’s square?’” even if the demonstrative expression “that way” refers to something non-conceptual (2001: 255). Relatedly, a thinker who comes to believe that something is square on the basis of how it looks, where its looking that way to her amounts to her

being in a state with non-conceptual content, can articulate her reasons: "I believe it's square because it looks that way" (2001: 256).<sup>7</sup>

Now Peacocke, of course, is assuming here that the reason-giving states have representational content. But it is not clear that this feature is essential to his challenge to McDowell.<sup>8</sup> For even if a perceptual state lacks content altogether, it still seems open to a subject to scrutinize its putative reason-giving relation to belief, asking for example "Is my perceiving this package a reason for judging that my books have arrived?" Similarly, saying "Because I see a package" seems like a perfectly good way of articulating at least one possible reason one might have for believing that one's books have arrived, namely that one sees a package. It is perhaps less natural to suppose that someone might regard her perception of the package as a reason for the more basic belief that there is a package in front of her. While it is not impossible to imagine someone's asking "Is my perceiving this package a reason for believing that there is a package here?" this would seem to be at most a limiting case, given that someone who can describe herself as perceiving a package is already committed to there being a package there.<sup>9</sup> Still, this lack of naturalness does not invalidate the suggestion that one's perceiving a package can be a reason for believing that there is a package in front of one, and it is perfectly plausible that someone might reply, when

<sup>7</sup> A similar line of argument is offered in Byrne (2005: 240–242) and Speaks (2005, 374–375). Both Byrne and Speaks endorse conceptualism but reject the view that it is required to accommodate the reason-giving character of perceptual experience.

<sup>8</sup> This is not to say outright that it is *not* essential. For Peacocke, part of what secures the rational relation between perceptions and beliefs is that there is an internal connection between the "way" in which a perceiver perceives a thing, and the "way" the perceiver believes the thing to be. It is, in part, because the thing looks *square* to the perceiver that its looking the way that it does is a reason for the perceiver to judge that it is square. So on the face of it, Peacocke's response to McDowell does seem to depend on the assumption that perceptual states have content. The same holds for Byrne's more articulated version of the response (2005: 240–242). Byrne finds it puzzling that a perceptual state without content, such as a "mere sensation," could provide a reason to believe that a thing is blue. But a perceptual state in which an object looks blue can provide such a reason because it has content, and more specifically, according to Byrne, content which strictly implies that the object is blue.

I have argued (2006a: 414) that Peacocke's assumption of an internal relation between a thing's looking a certain way to a perceiver and its being a certain way rests on an equivocation on the notion of a "way of being perceived," and for that reason should be rejected. But it does not seem to me that Peacocke needs to rely on this internal relation in order to argue that we can cite perceptual states as reasons for beliefs. Perhaps, as in Gupta (2006), one can cite one's perceptual experience *E* as a reason for the belief that *p* not because there is an internal connection between the content of *E* and *p*, but because one has knowledge of external facts about the world and one's sense-organs which imply that experiences of kind *E* typically occur only when *p* is in fact the case.

<sup>9</sup> I am here using "perceiving an F" in the same sense in which it is used on the object view, namely in a sense where you do not count as perceiving an F unless there is in fact an F present to you. For the distinction between this use of the expression, and a use which does not involve commitment to the presence of the F, see for example Price (1932: 22–24) and Harman (1990: 36–37). Travis objects to the second use (2004: 85).

asked why she believes that there is a package in the vicinity, "Because I see it." It might seem, then, that the line of thought in the previous section is mistaken: that there is nothing at all mysterious about the idea that one's perceiving a particular package, as construed on the object view, can be a reason for, or rationalize, beliefs concerning either the package or the implications of its presence.

In response to this objection, I want to look more closely at the notions of "reason" and "rationalize" that figure in the relevant debates. To fix ideas, let us consider a particular case of belief-acquisition: one where you look out of the window, see that the streets are wet, and come to believe that it rained. Assuming that this happens in the ordinary way, rather than, for example, because the sight of wet streets is associated with some trauma on account of which your present experience triggers delusional flashbacks replicating childhood memories of rain, this looks like a paradigm case of rational belief formation. In particular, it seems to involve a paradigm case of rational transition between beliefs: from the perceptual belief that the streets are wet (which is either a part of, or a consequence of, your seeing that they are wet) to the inferential belief that it rained. What, in this transition, should we describe as your "reason" for believing that it rained? According to T. M. Scanlon's characterization, a reason for an attitude is a "consideration counting in favour of [it]" (1998: 17). What counts in favor of your belief that it rained, in the scenario we are considering, is the fact, or perhaps the proposition, that the streets are wet.<sup>10</sup> When you are asked why you believe that it rained, and you reply "Because the streets are wet," it is this fact or proposition which you are citing as your reason. But there is also a philosophical usage in which your "reason" for believing that it rained is not the fact or proposition that the streets are wet, but rather the belief which has this fact or proposition as its content. This usage is exemplified in Donald Davidson's claim that that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief" (1983: 310). Davidson clearly does not mean to deny the possibility of your citing the fact of the wet streets in support of your belief that it rained. So he must be using "reason" in a different sense, one in which the "reason" is not the fact which you take to support the belief, but your belief that the supporting fact obtains.

I am inclined to think that the first sense of "reason" is more fundamental, and that talk of reasons in the second sense can be paraphrased away in terms of reasons in the first sense. But it is convenient to allow both uses to

<sup>10</sup> The distinction between these options does not matter for present purposes.

stand, and I will distinguish them in what follows by referring to reasons in the first and second senses respectively as “reasons<sub>1</sub>,” and “reasons<sub>2</sub>.”<sup>11</sup> Can we distinguish corresponding senses of the term “rationalize”? Here it seems to me that the most natural construal of that term is cognate with talk of reasons<sub>2</sub>, rather than reasons<sub>1</sub>. It is your belief that the streets are wet, not the fact that the streets are wet, which is most naturally described as making rationally intelligible, or “rationalizing,” your belief that it rained. And this is the sense in which I have been using the term up to this point. But some philosophers might be inclined to an understanding of the term “rationalize” in which it is the fact of the streets being wet, in this situation, which has the “rationalizing” force (even if only in virtue of its being believed by you). So let us stipulate also two senses of “rationalize.” In the case we described, your belief that it rained is rationalized<sub>2</sub> by your belief that the streets are wet, and rationalized<sub>1</sub> by the fact, or proposition, that the streets are wet.

With these distinctions in mind, let us return to the question of what is required for perceptions to stand in rational relations to belief. When Peacocke cites the possibility of a thinker’s scrutinizing the putatively reason-giving relation between a perception and a belief by asking “Is something’s looking that way a reason for judging that it’s square?,” or of her articulating her reason for a belief by saying “I believe it’s square because it looks that way,” which sense of “reason” does he have in mind? It seems to me that it must be the first sense. Her asking whether the thing’s looking a certain way is a reason for judging that the thing is square, or citing its looking that way as a reason for her belief that it is square, is analogous to her asking whether the streets’ being wet is a reason for believing that it rained, or saying that she believes that it rained on the grounds that the streets are wet. The fact that the thing looks a certain way to her, i.e. that she has a certain perceptual experience of it, is figuring in her reason-giving in the same way that the streets’ being wet figures in our paradigm case of rationalization: namely as a consideration which potentially favors the belief in question, or a reason<sub>1</sub>.<sup>12</sup> Putting the point another way, the perceptual experience plays the same rationalizing role as the wet streets: it is something whose presence, or the fact of whose presence, can serve as a reason<sub>1</sub>. So if this is the model of rationalizing that the defender of the object view intends to exploit, then perceptual experiences as construed by the object view will

<sup>11</sup> I discuss this distinction in Ginsborg (2006c: section I).

<sup>12</sup> This is clear in Byrne’s presentation of the non-conceptualist response to McDowell’s articulation argument, since Byrne has the non-conceptualist identify reasons with propositions (2005: 238–241).

also provide reasons<sub>1</sub>. That you have an actually existing package presented to you perceptually will be a consideration which can tell in favor of your forming certain beliefs, just as, in our paradigm example, the streets’ being wet is a consideration which can tell in favor of your belief that it rained.<sup>13</sup>

However, I do not think that this way of construing the reason-giving relation does justice to the motivations underlying the requirement that perceptions be capable of rationalizing beliefs. To address the worries about coherentism which motivate McDowell’s insistence on the requirement, perceptions must be capable of being reasons for beliefs in the same sense in which beliefs are (typically) reasons for beliefs: that is, they must rationalize<sub>2</sub> beliefs. If it were sufficient for them to be, or more precisely to figure in, reasons<sub>1</sub>, then it would be possible to avoid the threat of coherentism without making any claims about perceptual experience at all. We could avert the coherentist threat, that our beliefs constitute a self-contained system without rational grounding from anything outside them, by pointing to any example in which a belief is rationalized<sub>1</sub> by a fact which does not itself involve someone’s having a belief. For example, we could point out that, in our paradigm example of rational belief formation, the fact that the streets are wet serves as a reason<sub>1</sub> for the belief that it rained. But this would clearly be too easy. Or, to put it another way, it would miss the point of Davidson’s “coherentist” principle. When Davidson says that nothing but a belief can be a reason for another belief, he does not want to rule out that the fact or proposition that the streets are wet can be a reason<sub>1</sub> for believing that it rained. Nor, for that matter, does he want to rule out that sensations or other psychological states that are not themselves beliefs can figure in rationalizations<sub>1</sub> of beliefs. We can cite the occurrence of our sensation of a green light flashing, just as we can cite any non-psychological fact which might indicate that there is a green light flashing, as a reason<sub>1</sub> for believing that there is a green light flashing. What Davidson wants to rule out is the possibility that anything other than a belief could play the

<sup>13</sup> Gupta’s account (2006: 188–189) of how perceptual experiences entitle us to judgments only in combination with certain beliefs, about e.g. the functioning of our sense-organs and the prevailing perceptual conditions, suggests that this is how he understands the reason-giving role of experience. On a separate point: there is a question about whether, on this kind of model, we can say that the experience itself serves as a reason<sub>1</sub>. Because I take reasons<sub>1</sub> to be facts or propositions, I think that strictly speaking it is not the experience but the fact of one’s having the experience which is the reason<sub>1</sub>. However, we often do not draw a distinction, in ordinary talk, between someone’s experience and the fact of their having it. So the thought that (the fact of) your seeing *x*, or (the fact of) *x*’s looking *F* to you, is your reason<sub>1</sub> for believing *p*, could be expressed by saying that your experience of *x*, or your experience of *x* as *F* is your reason<sub>1</sub> for believing *p*. (We might also say that the wet streets are your reason<sub>1</sub> for believing that it rained; here again, strictly speaking, your reason<sub>1</sub> is [the fact of] the streets’ being wet.)



kind of rationalizing role that is paradigmatically played by beliefs – as I have put it, that anything other than a belief could rationalize<sub>2</sub> another belief. So if the claim that perceptions stand in rational relation to beliefs is to cut against Davidson, then it must be interpreted as the claim that they rationalize<sub>2</sub> beliefs, and not just that their occurrence can provide reasons<sub>1</sub> for beliefs.

Might the object theorist maintain, then, that your perception of the package is a reason<sub>2</sub> rather than a reason<sub>1</sub> for believing that there is a package in front of you? Here again, we might look, for a possible model, to discussions of non-conceptual content. When Richard Heck, for example, defends non-conceptualism by arguing against McDowell that perceptions need not have conceptual content in order to be reasons for belief, he makes clear that he takes them to be what I have called reasons<sub>2</sub> rather than reasons<sub>1</sub>: “perceptions justify beliefs . . . and provide reasons for belief. . . pretty much the same way beliefs do” (Heck 2000: 509).<sup>14</sup> But Heck’s model cannot simply be taken over by the object view, since, as he makes clear, it depends on the claim that “perceptions are . . . like beliefs insofar as to be in a perceptual state is to hold an . . . attitude towards a certain *content*” (2000: 509, my emphasis). Perception for Heck, like belief, “purport[s] to represent how the world is,” and that is why perceptions can play the same reason-giving role. So the object theorist is in the more difficult position of having to show that perceptions can play the same kind of reason-giving role as beliefs even though, unlike beliefs, they do not have representational content.

While I cannot argue that this task is impossible, I can try to bring out the difficulty it faces by contrasting the present case with our paradigm case of rational belief formation. On the approach we are considering, the perception of the package has to play the same kind of role in rationalizing the belief that there is a package present that the belief that the streets are wet plays in rationalizing the belief that it rained. In our paradigm case it is plausible to suppose that the belief plays that rationalizing<sub>2</sub> role because it, so to speak, makes available to you a reason<sub>1</sub> for your belief, namely the

<sup>14</sup> See also Heck (2000: 517–519), where Heck considers a different kind of reply to McDowell. As I see it, this reply, which Heck rejects, is a version of the strategy which understands perceptual states as reasons<sub>1</sub>. The “linguistic tangle” to which he refers (Heck 2000: 519 n.30) corresponds to the ambiguity I aim to resolve with talk of reasons<sub>1</sub> and reasons<sub>2</sub>. (Heck tries to address it by distinguishing what one believes or how things appear to one, on the one hand, from the fact that one believes what one does, or that things appear that way to one, on the other, but I do not think that this goes far enough in capturing the contrast.) Alan Millar’s view that there is a “quasi-inferential” link between experiences and beliefs (1991: 111–122) also seems to identify experiences with reasons<sub>1</sub>. However, the account of perceptual justification which he gives (2007: 185–187) seems to me to cast the having of perceptual experiences in the reason<sub>1</sub> role instead.

consideration that the streets are wet. When you form your belief that it rained, you have “in view” the fact or proposition that the streets are wet, and you are in a position to cite that fact or proposition as a reason<sub>1</sub> for your belief that it rained. So if your perception of the package is to play the same kind of role with respect to your belief that there is a package in front of you, then it is plausible to suppose that it must also bring into view a consideration which supports the belief that there is a package in front of you. But what consideration could that be? If, contrary to the object view, your perception were taken to involve the representation of the package as having package-like features, say as being brown or rectangular, or indeed if your perception were taken to represent the package as, simply, a package, then there would at least be a case to be made for saying that it brings into view a consideration supporting the belief that there is a package in front of you. That the thing in front of you is brown or rectangular is a reason<sub>1</sub> for believing that there is a package in front of you, and the same might be said, as a limiting case, of the fact that it is a package. However, according to the object view, your experience does not bring into view any facts about the package, but only the package itself. And the package itself cannot count in favor, either of the belief that it is a package, or of the belief that there is a package in front of you. Not being a fact or proposition, it is simply not the right kind of thing to serve as a reason<sub>1</sub> for a belief.

A possible response here would be to broaden the “object view” by including items other than objects among the constituents of reality with which perceptual experience can present us. Perhaps, under favorable conditions, our experience can put us directly in touch not only with the package, but also with its brownness and rectangularity, or even, simply, with its package-like character. Such a broadening would preserve the spirit, if not the letter, of the object view as long as it were allowed that these features, no less than the objects which possess them, were genuine elements of the world.<sup>15</sup> But at the same time, the response goes, it would allow us to construe perception as rationalizing<sub>2</sub> belief insofar as these features might

<sup>15</sup> Brewer himself rejects the suggestion that the view could be broadened in this way, since he denies that general properties are “features of the physical world on a par with the objects themselves which have them” (2006: 180 n.9). We should also note that the sense in which a property is perceptually presented on this broadened view is different from the sense in which, on Brewer’s view, a property is accessible in perception. Brewer does think that the properties of objects as well as the objects themselves are in some sense available in perception, and, relatedly, determine the subjective character of perception, but he takes these properties to include properties which, intuitively, we do not “see the object as having” (for example, equality in length in the case of the Müller-Lyer diagram). On the present proposal, though, the properties which perception presents to us would be just those properties which the content theorist would view as belonging to the representational content of perception, so that the brownness of the package would not be presented to us in the case where, say, we mistook the package for a patch of sunlight.

constitute reasons<sub>1</sub> for belief. In seeing the brownness of the package, say, we would be presented with a consideration favoring the belief that it was a package.

Now one difficulty with this response as it stands is that one's being presented with an item and with a feature which it has does not yet add up to one's being presented with the kind of connection between the item and the feature which would seem to be needed if the experience is to play this rationalizing<sub>2</sub> role. We can see this by thinking of cases in which you see an object and one of its features, but without seeing the feature as belonging to the object. If the package is behind a screen door, and you see its brown color as belonging to the door rather than the package, then there does not seem to be, in what you see – the package, and its brownness – any more of a reason<sub>1</sub> for believing the item to be a package than was provided by the package on its own. What seems to be needed, in order for your perception to rationalize<sub>2</sub> that belief, is that it present you not just with the package and the brownness, but with the package and the brownness in some kind of predicative or at least proto-predicative relation: something which might be expressed as *the package's being brown*.<sup>16</sup> A view of perception which apparently meets this need, while still remaining within the spirit of the object view, is defended by Mark Johnston, for whom perception presents us with states and events as well as objects and stuffs. We can perceive such things as the snubnosedness of Socrates, or the astringency of the calvados, where these are conceived of as states or conditions of Socrates or the calvados, and as being on a par with events such as a particular chiding of Socrates by Xanthippe (Johnston 2006: 280–281). These states and events, Johnston emphasizes, are not to be confused with facts or propositions. There is a “difference between such things as the snubnosedness of Socrates – a certain state or condition of Socrates – and the true proposition that Socrates is snubnosed” (2006: 281). For this reason, just as on the object view, perception lacks truth-evaluable representational content: “sensory awareness is ‘presentational’ not representational” (2006: 284). At the same time, though, the states and events which we perceive might be thought to serve as reasons<sub>1</sub> for belief. Perhaps the “brownness of the package” on Johnston’s construal, that is the state or condition of the package constituted by *its being brown*, can count in favor of believing the package to be a package in a way that the package itself, or the co-presence of the package and its brownness, cannot. And in

<sup>16</sup> The difference between seeing a feature of *x*, and seeing *x* having the feature, is emphasized by Mark Textor (2009).

that case your perception of the package’s brownness – of its state of being brown – can rationalize<sub>2</sub> the belief that it is a package. Alternatively, your perception can rationalize<sub>2</sub>, as a limiting case, your believing the package to be brown, where that belief in turn can rationalize<sub>2</sub> your believing it to be a package.

While I cannot pursue this suggestion in depth here, it seems to me that the aspect of Johnston’s account which preserves the spirit of the object view – that is, the distinction between states and conditions on the one hand, and facts or propositions on the other – undermines the thought that perception, on that account, can rationalize<sub>2</sub> belief. For whatever plausibility there is to the idea that perceiving Socrates’s snubnosedness can rationalize<sub>2</sub> the belief that he is snubnosed, seems to rely on the assumption that, in perceiving Socrates’s snubnosedness, one perceives *that* he is snubnosed, and hence is presented with a fact or proposition counting in favor (here, as a limiting case) of the belief that he is snubnosed.<sup>17</sup> The point can be brought out most readily in connection with events. It is possible to perceive the event of a chiding of Socrates by Xanthippe without realizing that Socrates is being chided by Xanthippe: one might at the time be capable of describing what one is hearing only as “a muffled voice coming from the next room,” and find out only later, if at all, that one had heard Xanthippe chiding Socrates. If that is the way in which one hears Xanthippe chiding Socrates, then, even if one’s perception causes one to form the belief that Xanthippe is chiding Socrates, the belief is not rationalized<sub>2</sub> by the perception. It is the fact or proposition that Xanthippe is chiding Socrates which can serve as a reason<sub>1</sub> for, or count in favor of, this or that belief, not the event of Xanthippe’s chiding Socrates. If we follow Johnston in assuming that states and conditions are to be understood on the same model as events,<sup>18</sup> the same must hold true for them. Seeing the package’s brownness, or the package’s being brown, can rationalize<sub>2</sub> the belief that the package is brown, or a package, only if it involves seeing the package to be brown.<sup>19</sup> The state of the package’s being brown, in

<sup>17</sup> Textor (2009) makes a related point.

<sup>18</sup> The question whether we should lies outside the scope of this chapter.

<sup>19</sup> For a case where it does not, consider an apparatus designed so that a light flashes just in case a brown object is placed within range of it. Someone who sees the flashing light might be said to see the state of the object’s being brown whether or not she is aware of the purpose of the apparatus, and hence of the fact that the object is brown. While this might seem to strain the idea of “seeing an object’s being brown” or “seeing the brownness of an object,” I think that this is because we typically understand these expressions as implying that the object is seen *to be* brown, and hence that we grasp the fact or proposition that it is brown.

contrast to the proposition that it is brown, cannot itself serve as a reason<sub>1</sub>, so the perception of that state cannot, simply as such, serve as a reason<sub>2</sub>.<sup>20</sup>

The object theorist could at this point offer a quite different kind of response, namely that rationalizing<sub>2</sub> does not necessarily require the presentation of reasons<sub>1</sub>. Perhaps it is a merely contingent feature of the way in which beliefs rationalize<sub>2</sub> that they present us with reasons<sub>1</sub>, so that other psychological states, such as perceptions, can rationalize<sub>2</sub> beliefs in a way which does not involve this feature. The rationalizing<sub>2</sub> relation, so construed, would be a more primitive relation than the relation between reasons<sub>1</sub> and the beliefs they support, in the sense that we could understand what it is for one psychological state to rationalize<sub>2</sub> another without appealing to the notion of a fact or proposition's counting in favor of a belief. While this line of response again requires more discussion than I can offer here, it seems to me that if we accept it, we lose whatever handle we had on what it is for one psychological state to rationalize<sub>2</sub> another. Without further clarification of the rationalizing<sub>2</sub> relation, we are not in a position to understand why some beliefs are reasons<sub>2</sub> for the beliefs they cause whereas others are not (as in the case where one belief leads to another through free association). And, more importantly for the philosophy of perception, we are not in a position to understand why, among the myriad psychological and non-psychological causes of our beliefs, it is beliefs and perceptions which deserve to be singled out as capable of rationalizing<sub>2</sub> them.<sup>21</sup>

#### 7.4 A CONTENT VIEW NOT MODELED ON BELIEF

The argument of the previous two sections suggests that, if we want to respect the demand that perceptions be able to rationalize beliefs, in the

<sup>20</sup> What if the view is broadened still further so that the elements of reality which can be presented in experience include facts or true propositions? In that case, your perception of the package could serve as a reason<sub>2</sub> for believing that what you see is a package by acquainting you immediately with the fact either that it is brown, or (as a limiting case) with the fact that it is a package. McDowell's (1994b) view can be read along these lines; see also Martin (2002: 399). However, at least if facts are understood as true propositions rather than as truthmakers, it is no longer clear that such a view qualifies as a version of the object view, as opposed to the content view. I have offered an independent argument against this kind of view (2006c: 303ff.); a related objection is raised in Chen (2006: 251–252).

<sup>21</sup> The object theorist might argue here that they need not be singled out: perhaps many different possible states can rationalize<sub>2</sub> beliefs. James Pryor suggests that a headache can justify you in believing you have a headache (2005: 192–193), and the context suggests that the kind of justification he has in mind is rationalization<sub>2</sub> as opposed to rationalization<sub>1</sub>. But, while I cannot pursue the point here, I am inclined to think that the occurrence of a headache can at most be (a limiting case of) a reason<sub>1</sub> for believing that you have a headache.

sense of “rationalize” which is relevant to worries about avoiding coheren-tism, then we have to understand perception as involving not just presentation of an object, but presentation of the object as having some specific feature or features.<sup>22</sup> And this seems to require that we ascribe to it representational content with the same kind of generality which characterizes the content of belief and thought. But is it possible to do this while still respecting the intuitions which lead Brewer and others to reject the content view, specifically that perceptual experience is explanatorily prior to belief and thought, and that it acquaints us directly with actual objects? I want to suggest that it is. As we saw in section 7.1, Brewer takes the notion of representational content which figures in the content view to be modeled on that of “a person's *thought* about the world around him” (2006: 166) and, more specifically, on the “initial model” of a singular thought that an object *a* in the environment is *F*, qualified to yield a conception of perceptual content as a species of thought-content which is passively entertained and doubly demonstrative. The difficulties Brewer sees for the content view derive from elements of the “initial model” – most fundamentally, the involvement of generality – which it retains in its qualified form. But I want to suggest another conception of the representational content of perception, independent of the “initial model,” which does not require us to construe the representational content of perception as a modified form of thought-content.<sup>23</sup> This conception, I will suggest, allows us to understand perceptual experiences as having the kind of content which allows them to rationalize beliefs, but without falling foul of the difficulties I have mentioned.

My suggested approach takes as its starting point Brewer's own view of perception, that is the object view, but then introduces two modifications which have as their joint upshot that while perception still presents objects to us, we represent them, in that perception, as having general features. The first preserves fully the spirit of the object view, in that, like the view which Brewer himself proposes, the view under this first modification denies representational content to perception. Where it differs from Brewer's view is allowing more of a role, in determining the character of perceptual experience, to features of the subject who is having that experience. For Brewer,

<sup>22</sup> In Ginsborg (2006c) I argue, against McDowell, for a more demanding condition, namely that the perceptual experience that *x* is *F* cannot rationalize, a belief unless it involves commitment to the claim that *x* is *F*. But the argument which I am presenting against the object view does not require acceptance of this stronger view.

<sup>23</sup> I offer a version of this conception, as part of a defense of conceptualism, in Ginsborg (2006b). A similar conception, articulated in a way which remains neutral on the question of conceptualism, is developed in Ginsborg (2006a).

the “basic idea” of the object view is the idea that “the core subjective character of perceptual experience is given simply by citing the physical object which is its mind-independent direct object” (2008: 171). This basic idea, as he indicates elsewhere, is qualified to some extent so as to take into account factors additional to the actual physical object perceived: we can characterize what it is like for the subject to have the experience “by citing the perceptible features of the specific mind-independent empirical things which are accessible to her in perception, *given her point of view on the world and the relevant perceptual conditions*” (2004: 69, my emphasis). But we might wonder whether the austerity of the basic idea could not be relaxed still further to take into account the subject’s psychological constitution, and in particular her capacities (innate or acquired) for perceptual discrimination. For it is not unreasonable to suppose that the subjective nature of experience is determined not only by features of the environment external to the subject (the character of the object, the viewing conditions) and by the subject’s location within that environment, but also by the subject’s discriminative capacities.

It will be helpful both for the present point, and as a background to discussing the second modification, to have in mind some examples. Imagine two animals who have undergone different kinds of training, one designed to bring about responsiveness to color, the other designed to bring about responsiveness to shape. The first animal always produces a certain characteristic response when shown a red object as opposed to, say, a yellow one, but shows no sign of being able to respond differentially to spheres as opposed to cylinders. The second animal exhibits the reverse pattern of responses: its responses discriminate among objects of different shapes, but not among objects of different colors. So when the two animals produce their characteristic discriminative response to, say, a red ball, we can think of each of them as reacting to a different feature of the object. The first animal’s response is prompted by the ball’s redness; that of the second animal, by its spherical shape.<sup>24</sup> Now I think it is plausible to suppose, given the difference in their patterns of response, that these two animals, confronted with the same red ball, have subjectively different experiences. In acquiring their respective ways of sorting or discriminating objects of different colors and shapes, the animals have also come to

<sup>24</sup> To qualify: whether we say that the animal is responding to the ball’s redness will depend on how finely it discriminates. For example, if it discriminates between red and yellow things, but not between red and orange ones, then it will be plausible to think of it as reacting not to the ball’s redness, but to a feature which it has in virtue of being colored either red or orange.

experience those objects in corresponding ways. We might put this by saying that the first animal’s experience registers the ball’s color and not its shape, whereas the second animal’s experience registers its shape but not its color.

For a related example in the case of humans, imagine two people who have different discriminative capacities with respect to the experience of music. One can discriminate among chords of different qualities (for example, major, minor, and diminished triads), the other among the timbres of different but related instruments (cornet, trumpet, saxophone). It is natural to think that each of them, listening to the same major chord played by a saxophone trio, will hear it differently. Because the first is, as we might put it, sensitive to the harmonic qualities of what she is hearing but not to the timbre, her experience will register its character of being a major triad. The experience of the second, conversely, will register the characteristic saxophone sound of the chord, but not its harmonic quality.

It is important to note that nothing I have said commits us to the idea that the experiences mentioned in the examples have representational content. We might indeed say that the animals in the first example see the red ball, respectively, *as red* and *as spherical*, which seems to imply that the animals’ experiences involve the ascription to the ball of the corresponding general feature. But this, I think, is just for convenience. The first animal does not “see the ball as red” in a sense which bears any philosophical weight; while it has a characteristic way of perceiving the ball, there is no particular way it perceives the ball *to be*.<sup>25</sup> Rather, saying that it sees the ball “as red” is just a way of saying that it perceives the ball in a way which registers the ball’s redness, or that the ball’s redness has an influence on the phenomenal character of its experience. The situation is less clear in the second example, since there might seem to be more of a case here for saying that the experiences have genuine representational content. Typically a subject who can discriminate different kinds of chords or the sounds of discriminate musical instruments is also a subject who can perceive a chord as major, or as having the characteristic saxophone timbre, in the philosophically substantial sense which implies some kind of ascription of the corresponding general quality to the thing perceived. I will say more about this shortly, but for now I just want to note that this is not a necessary feature of the example I gave. We might for example notice that an infant – perhaps destined to become the next Sonny

<sup>25</sup> I discuss this distinction in Ginsborg (2000b: 358–360) and Ginsborg (2006a: 413–414).

Rollins – becomes exceptionally alert and attentive whenever she hears the sound of a tenor saxophone. It is reasonable to suppose that her experience registers the timbre of what she is hearing, and in this respect differs from the experience that she has listening to the same tune played, say, on a trombone or on an alto saxophone in the lower part of its range. But we can suppose this without supposing that she represents what she is hearing *as* having the sound of a tenor saxophone, or indeed as having any particular kind of sound at all.

For reasons related to the consideration I just mentioned, the modification I have described does not represent a significant departure from the object view as Brewer describes it. It simply specifies that the range of features which count as “accessible to [the subject] in perception,” and hence determine the character of her perceptual experience, is limited not only by the subject’s point of view on the object and the conditions of perception, but also by her capacities for perceptual discrimination. The second modification represents a more radical departure from Brewer’s view since, as I will go on to suggest, it does commit us to the idea that perceptual experience has representational content. To introduce it, I want to propose a distinction between two very general ways in which a subject can carry out an activity of discrimination or sorting, ways which I will describe by saying that she can do it with or without the consciousness of normativity, and label, even more briefly, by speaking of “normative” and “non-normative” sorting or discrimination. Let us go back to the very simple case of the animal which, when prompted, produces a characteristic behavioral response to red things which (let us suppose) it does not produce to things of any other color. Unless it is a very intelligent animal, we are not likely to be tempted by the thought that, in producing that response to a particular object, it takes itself to be responding appropriately to the object in the light of its previous training. We are likely instead to say that it responds “blindly” to the redness of the object. Part of what this implies is that its response is not guided by its prior recognition of the object as red. Its response is not, for example, prompted by the reflection that, since this object is red and it has been rewarded for responding to red objects in the past, it is likely to be rewarded for responding to this object too. But it also implies something stronger, namely that the animal produces its response without any sense at all of the response being called for by, or appropriate to, its present situation. It is that absence of any sense of appropriateness, and not just the absence of a process of deliberation, which I want to characterize by saying that the animal discriminates red objects without the consciousness of normativity.

By contrast, much of human activity appears to involve a kind of discrimination or sorting which does involve the consciousness, in producing a sorting response to an object, that the response is appropriate to the object. The most pervasive cases involve the use of language, but looking at a simpler case makes it easier to compare this kind of normative discrimination with the non-normative discrimination just described. If you are given a bowl of red and black beads and asked, without further specification, to sort them into two different boxes, you will most likely put the red beads in one box and the black beads in the other. As far as the tangible result of your activity is concerned, we can equate it with that of, say, a pigeon trained to distinguish red things from black. You will produce one kind of response to the red beads, namely, putting them in box A, and another to the black beads, namely, putting them in box B. But what you do will be different from what the pigeon does, I want to suggest, in that, when you put each bead in its respective box, you will take yourself to be responding to the bead appropriately. Your putting a given red bead in the box with the other red beads will be carried out with the sense that this is where the bead belongs.

Now the examples I gave in discussing the first modification of Brewer’s object view were of non-normative sorting; or at least, as in the case of the human subjects discriminating timbre and harmony, they left open whether the sorting was normative or non-normative. My point there was to suggest that the subject’s capacities for that kind of sorting or discrimination could be seen as determining the subjective character of her experience. But I now want to suggest – and here I am proposing the second modification – that it makes a further difference to the subjective character of the experience whether the capacities in question are for normative or non-normative sorting. And specifically, I want to propose, a subject who is capable of normatively discriminating red things from things of other colors – that is, of discriminating them with the awareness that her discriminative response is appropriate – has experiences of red things which not only register their redness, but also represent them *as* red. The thought here is that what it takes for a subject to perceive something not only *in* a certain way, but also *as being* a certain way, is just for her to have the kind of perception of it that a subject typically has when she is capable of normatively discriminating the presence of the corresponding feature. You count as perceiving a given object as red, as opposed to merely perceiving the thing in such a way that the redness influences the phenomenal character of your experience, if you perceive it in the kind of way which is associated with your being able to sort it with other red things, and where your sorting involves the

consciousness that you are sorting appropriately. This thought is motivated in part by the intuition that taking a set of objects to share a certain general property is in the first instance a matter of taking them, in some sense, to “belong together.” In order to see the bead as red you do not first need to be capable of abstract thought to the effect that this or that thing is red. It is sufficient, rather, that you have the kind of perception of it which leads you not just to put it in Box A, but to put it in Box A with the sense that that is where it ought to go. But the thought also relies on the idea that when you take things to “belong together” in the context of this kind of sorting activity, you are not engaged in an exercise of abstract thought which requires you to recognize that the things share a common property. Rather, your “taking the things to belong together” is an aspect of normative sorting regarded as a more primitive activity: an activity which does not presuppose the capacity to recognize the objects being sorted as having features which make your way of sorting appropriate.<sup>26</sup>

This line of thought, if acceptable, yields a modified version of Brewer’s “object view” on which perception, while still presenting objects to us, also presents them to us as having general features, and thus has representational content. The subjective character of perceptual experience is given, as on Brewer’s view, by citing the object perceived, along with its perceptible properties. But it is also determined by the subject’s capacities for discriminating those properties. So the phenomenal character of the experience of a red ball will vary depending on whether the subject is a creature who is incapable of responding discriminatively to red things at all, a creature who responds discriminatively but “blindly” to red things, or finally, a creature who responds discriminatively to red things with the consciousness of her response as appropriate to her situation. In this last case, on my proposal, the experience has representational content: the subject represents the ball as red. So the upshot of the modifications I have suggested is that, in the typical case, perceptual experience, for human beings, has representational content. More specifically, it has content of a kind which makes it capable of rationalizing<sub>2</sub> beliefs. For the perceptual state in which you see the ball as red, on my view, is a state in which the ball’s being red is made available to you to serve as a reason<sub>1</sub> for your subsequently formed beliefs. You might not be in a position to express linguistically the proposition that the ball is red, but insofar as you represent the ball, in your perception, as “belonging” with the objects which you have previously sorted in the same way, you are

<sup>26</sup> I argue for the possibility of this kind of activity in Ginsborg (2006b: 360–363), Ginsborg (2006a: 419–427), and Ginsborg (forthcoming: section II).

*eo ipso* representing it as having a general feature in common with those other objects. Like the linguistically expressible belief that the ball is red, or that the ball has the same color as the previously classified objects, your representational state is capable of rationalizing<sub>2</sub> any belief favored by the consideration that the ball has that general feature.

We can think of the view I have presented, then, as a version of the content view. As such, it avoids the difficulty I raised in sections 7.2 and 7.3 for views which deny representational content to perceptual experience, namely that they fail to allow for rational relations between perception and belief. But it differs in a crucial respect from the content view which Brewer takes as his target. As noted, Brewer assumes that the content view takes as its starting point an “initial model” of the content of a linguistically expressible thought. So the content view as Brewer understands it explicitly models perception on thinking: the notion of representational content which it employs is directly derived from the notion of the representational content of linguistically expressible thought. By contrast, the version of the content view which I have proposed is arrived at, so to speak, from the other direction. It begins with the pre-theoretically attractive notion of perception as direct acquaintance with objects, and then modifies it to introduce, first the idea that the same object can be perceived by different subjects in different ways depending on their capacities for perceptual discrimination, and then the idea that our perceptual discriminations can involve a sense of their own appropriateness to the object perceived. The notion of perceptual content which emerges on this view does not rely on the notion of the content of a linguistically expressible thought. Rather, it is constructed out of the notion of perceptual discrimination understood as involving a primitive awareness of normativity. The modifications made to the object view do indeed entail that perception resembles thought in having representational content, and specifically representational content with the generality characteristic of the content of thought. But the ascription of representational content to perception is motivated not by any prior commitment to a kinship between perception and thinking, but rather by considerations derived from reflection on the character of perception itself.

It follows, I think, that the view I am proposing is not vulnerable to the difficulties for the content view described in section 7.1.<sup>27</sup> First, the

<sup>27</sup> There remain further difficulties for the content view, in particular that developed in Travis (2004). Here I will say only that my own version of the content view avoids the difficulty raised by Travis by construing perceptual experience not as what he calls “allorepresentation” (its being represented

generality it ascribes to the content of perception does not undermine the explanatory priority of perceptual experience over belief and thought. For it understands what it is for a subject to perceive an object as having a general feature – as red, say – without appealing to the subject’s capacity to entertain, in an abstract way, thoughts involving the content *red*. Relatedly, it does not construe the generality in the content of her experience as a result of her having performed an “intellectual act of selection or categorization” (Brewer 2006: 174) of the kind Brewer describes in connection with the example of the red football. The only element in the account which might qualify here as an “intellectual act” is the subject’s consciousness, in making the discriminations to which her nature and training dispose her, that these discriminations are appropriate. But this consciousness does not presuppose an antecedent grasp of the corresponding concepts and, in particular, does not require her to be capable of representing things as having the corresponding features outside the perceptual context. The view I have offered thus leaves open the possibility of explaining her more sophisticated capacity to think of things, in the abstract, as possessing those features, in terms of her more primitive ability to perceive them as having those features when they are perceptually presented to her.

Second, the generality invoked here does not detract from the status of perceptual experience as “direct openness to the elements of physical reality” (Brewer 2006: 174). The view does indeed insist that there is more to the character of an experience than that of the object presented to us: it holds that there are different ways of being open to the same elements of physical reality, and that these involve our ascribing different general features to those elements. If we assume that the only way to understand this kind of generality is by way of a conception of thought drawn from outside the context of perception, then there might indeed be something incoherent about this position: perhaps the idea that our perception involves judging the object to have this or that general property does indeed, on that assumption, undermine the idea that what is presented to us in the perception is the particular object itself, rather than any of a range of surrogates to which that property can also be ascribed. But I have tried to suggest in this last section of the chapter that there is an alternative way of understanding the ascription to objects, within perception, of general properties. And I believe that this enables us to preserve the essential insight of the object

to one that things are thus and so) but rather as “autorepresentation” (one’s taking things to be thus and so) (see Travis 2004: 61–62). This opens my view to other difficulties, notably that of accounting for cases of known illusion (for example, seeing the Müller-Lyer lines as unequal in length while believing them to be equal), but space considerations preclude further discussion.

view, while still ascribing to experiences the kind of content which allows them to stand in rational relation to beliefs.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Predecessors of this chapter were presented at the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in 2006, and at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 2007. I am grateful for comments and discussion, on those and subsequent occasions, to Bill Brewer, John Campbell, Tim Crane, Dina Emundts, James Genone, John McDowell, Mike Martin, and Alan Millar.