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*The Objectivity of Perception*

**BILL BREWER**

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THE OBJECTIVITY OF PERCEPTION

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This year's Presidential Address marks the official inauguration of Bill Brewer as the 113th President of the Aristotelian Society.

## EDITORIAL NOTE

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# THE OBJECTIVITY OF PERCEPTION

BILL BREWER

## INTRODUCTION

WE BELIEVE that the ordinary physical objects that we perceive continue to exist unperceived. Intuitively, this is an aspect of any authentic characterization of how the world appears to us in perception. That is to say, asked what makes us think that the objects that we perceive continue to exist beyond our experience of them, the natural answer is that this is how things strike us in experience. But how can experience present its objects as continuing to exist beyond that very experience of them? I aim to explain this phenomenon. I start with an insight from Evans (1985). Familiar attempts to implement this insight, either pre-experientially or post-experientially, fail in my opinion. Here I introduce, motivate, defend, and elaborate an alternative approach to its implementation that I claim succeeds. Its key is to recognize the role of Evans's insight in the metaphysics of perceptual experience itself.

In section 1 I set out the Intuitive Datum to be explained and Evans's Insight that I claim is central to its explanation. I also say a little about the difficulties facing its familiar implementation, both post- and pre-experientially. Section 2 introduces and motivates my own preferred approach to its implementation. Section 3 defends and elaborates the position.<sup>1</sup>

### I. THE INTUITIVE DATUM, EVANS'S INSIGHT, POST- AND PRE-EXPERIENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

I begin with what I take to be an *Intuitive Datum*: the subjective nature of our perceptual experience intelligibly explains our belief in the continued existence unperceived of its ordinary physical objects. This already comes with baggage. I intend to leave the *subjective nature* of perceptual experience as open as possible and the idea of the *intelligible explanation* of belief by experience equally as a placeholder to be elaborated by the various accounts that I consider below of Intuitive Datum.<sup>2</sup> The basic idea is that the way things are for us as perceivers somehow explains our belief that the objects that we perceive continue to exist beyond our perception of them. That is to say, the subjective nature of our perceptual experience is more basic than and explanatory of our belief in the continued existence

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1 Much of the argument here is developed in greater detail and extent in my forthcoming book, *The Objectivity of Perception* (Brewer, forthcoming).

2 The Intuitive Datum has also been rejected (Spener, 2012; Mackie, 2019). I discuss this scepticism elsewhere (Brewer, forthcoming). I assume here that it is misplaced.

unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive. The question that shapes the remaining discussion is how exactly we should understand this explanation.

Evans offers the key to an answer as follows.

Hero [charged with making sense of the idea that the objects of his perception may continue to exist unperceived] must be able to understand the hypothesis, even if, in fact, he never believes it to be the case, that the phenomena of which he has experience should occur unperceived. Now, the idea of unperceived existence or rather the idea of existence now perceived, now unperceived, is not an idea that can stand on its own, stand without any surrounding theory. How is it possible that phenomena of the very same kind as those of which he has experience should occur in the absence of any experience? Such phenomena are obviously perceptible; why should they not be perceived? To answer this question, some rudimentary theory, or form of a theory of perception is required. This is the indispensable surrounding for the idea of existence unperceived, and so, of existence perceived. (Evans, 1985, pp. 261-2)

In the presence of this indispensable theoretical surrounding, perception of ordinary physical objects evidently jointly depends upon their existence and the satisfaction of further independent enabling conditions on their perception that may subsequently fail to obtain, in a way that intelligibly explains Hero's belief that such objects may continue to exist unperceived. This is *Evans's Insight*. The question is how in detail it is to be implemented. How exactly does a simple theory of perception structure perceptual experience in this way?

I argue at length elsewhere that two familiar strategies fail adequately to account for the Intuitive Datum (Brewer, forthcoming). According to the *post-experiential* approach, the subject herself is supposed actively to employ a simple theory of perception articulating the way in which what she perceives jointly depends upon what is there in the world anyway and her spatiotemporal route through the world and other enabling conditions upon her perception of it in thinking about the relation between her perceptual experience and the way things are in the world around her if her perception is to be the intelligible source of her belief that its objects continue to exist unperceived. I argue that this fails to explain the status of perceptual experience itself as the genuine source of her belief. According to the *pre-experiential* approach, on the other hand, a simple theory of perception is supposed to be implicit in the subpersonal processing that gives rise to the representational contents of her perceptual experience. I argue that this fails to make the existence unperceived of what she perceives genuinely intelligible

from her own point of view. Instead of repeating these objections, I turn to an alternative implementation of Evans's Insight that I prefer.

## 2. INTRODUCING AND MOTIVATING PERCEPTUALISM

Our problem is to explain how the subjective nature of perceptual experience makes intelligible from the perceiver's own point of view her belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that she perceives. The solution that I propose implements Evans's Insight in the metaphysics of such experience. I call it *Perceptualism*.

On the metaphysics that I endorse (Brewer, 2011), (OV), a person's perceptual experience at a time *is* her conscious acquaintance, from her position and orientation at that time and in the particular perceptual circumstances, with the worldly scene before her. This is not a causal explanation of her experience, but rather specifies the metaphysical nature of her conscious perceptual condition at that time. Thus, a simple theory of perception, with spatiotemporal and other enabling conditions on perception that are independent of what is there in the world anyway and may subsequently fail to be met, namely her position, orientation, and perceptual circumstances, is essential to the metaphysics of conscious perceptual experience itself. Perceptualism is the view that this is what accounts for the intelligible explanation by the subjective character of perceptual experience of her belief in the continued existence of its objects unperceived.

I offer the following structural argument for Perceptualism.

1. Assume that the metaphysics of perceptual experience is one-dimensional, that is, without any role for a simple theory of perception.
2. The fundamental characterization of such experience therefore appeals (a) to the simple presentation of certain entities, or (b) to the specification of perceptual representational content, or (c) to a conjunction of these two elements.
3. Supplementing this post-experientially fails to solve the problem.
4. 2(a) fails.
5. 2(b) fails.
6. 2(c) fails to improve on its conjuncts.
7. So the assumption of a one-dimensional metaphysics should be rejected.
8. The metaphysics of perceptual experience therefore requires a second dimension introducing a simple theory of perception.

9. (OV) constitutes an independently motivated two-dimensional metaphysics implementing Evans's Insight in this way.
10. Therefore, we should embrace Perceptualism as an adequate solution.

Premise 1 assumes for *reductio* that the metaphysics of perceptual experience is one-dimensional, aiming to account for its nature along a single dimension of variation, without any reference to the enabling conditions for that very perception itself. This suggests two very broad options in premise 2: (a) that perceptual experience consists in the simple presentation to the subject of certain specific entities of some sort: ideas, images, sense data, or even ordinary physical objects and some of their properties; (b) that perception consists in the subject's experiential representation with a specific content of some sort: conceptual, nonconceptual, singular, general, world-involving, world-independent, or whatever. I also include for *reductio* (c) any conjunction of these two options.

Premise 3 records the failure of any post-experiential implementation of Evans's Insight. For present purposes this stands as an unargued assumption.<sup>3</sup>

Premise 4 rests on Hume's objection to the very idea that perceptual experience might be the source of our belief in the continued existence of its objects unperceived (1978, I.4.ii). If such experience consists in the simple presentation of its objects, then it only constitutes a *basis* for the intelligible explanation of belief in the existence of its objects whilst they are presented in experience. That is to say, the subjective nature of perceptual experience constitutes such a basis only whilst the objects in question are presented in experience. Furthermore, their simple presentation in experience constitutes a basis for the explanation of belief only in the *existence* of such objects whilst they are so presented. That is to say, the existence in which the subjective nature of such experience constitutes a basis for the intelligible explanation of belief is only their existence *whilst they are being perceived*. Hence a one-dimensional presentational metaphysics of perceptual experience is incapable of accounting for the intelligible explanation by its subjective nature of the perceiver's belief in the continued existence of its objects unperceived.

Premise 5 depends on a dilemma faced by any one-dimensional content-based metaphysics of the kind that implements Evans's Insight pre-experientially, in the subpersonal processing that delivers such perceptual experiential content. If, on the one hand, perceptual content is supposed to fall short of the explicit representation of its objects *as* continuing to

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3. See Brewer (forthcoming, chs. 3 & 5) for the necessary argument.

exist unperceived, then some form of inference is required to get to that belief, and the position as a whole fails to account for perceptual experience itself as the source of our belief as required by the Intuitive Datum. On the other hand, if perceptual content is supposed explicitly to represent their continued existence unperceived, then it fails to make intelligible to the subject how and why its ordinary physical objects do indeed do so. Blank assertion out of the blue, as it were, is insufficient to solve the problem.<sup>4</sup>

There are certainly views that combine elements of both one-dimensional presentation and one-dimensional content.<sup>5</sup> None that I know explicitly address our problem here. But I fail to see how the addition of a second conjunct would succeed in overcoming the problems facing the first conjunct alone. Presentational experience constitutes a basis for the intelligible explanation of belief in the existence of its objects only whilst they are being perceived. Adding perceptual experiential content concerning such objects either falls short of the explicit representation of its objects as continuing to exist unperceived or it does not. If it does, then, once again, some form of inference is required to reach the belief in their continued existence unperceived; and the objection above applies. Nothing in the existence also of a simple presentational element to the metaphysics of perception that itself fails intelligibly to explain the belief serves to blunt the force of that objection. If, on the other hand, the additional perceptual experiential content explicitly represents the objects in question as continuing to exist unperceived, then the question to be faced is how this is supposed to make it genuinely intelligible to the subject herself how and why they do indeed do so. Once again, appeal to the presence of also of a presentational element to the metaphysics of perception that itself fails intelligibly to explain the belief does nothing to answer that question. So the conjunction of a one-dimensional metaphysics of simple presentation and a one-dimensional metaphysics of perceptual representational content fails to improve on its conjuncts. This is premise 6.

Premise 7 derives the valid conclusion of the reductio initiated in premise 2, that the assumption of a one-dimensional metaphysics of conscious perceptual experience should be rejected. A second dimension implementing Evans's Insight should therefore be added to the metaphysics of perceptual experience. This is premise 8.

Premise 9 emphasizes that the (OV) metaphysics of perception that I endorse, according to which a person's perceptual experience at a time is her conscious acquaintance at that time with particular ordinary physical

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4. See Brewer (forthcoming, ch. 6) for elaboration of this argument.

5. Peacocke (1983) and Block (2010) are perhaps the most explicit and prominent of these. See Brewer (2019) and Block (2019) for discussion of Block's motivation for the combination.



objects in the world around her and with certain of their properties, from a given point of view and in specific circumstances of perception, is precisely an instance of this kind. It is a metaphysics of conscious perceptual experience with two dimensions of variation in the nature of the perceiver's condition at any time: (i) the particular objects and their properties that she is acquainted with at that time; and (ii) her spatial point of view at that time and other relevant circumstances enabling her acquaintance with those things then. Furthermore, the role of its second dimension is explicitly to highlight the essential contribution to its subjective nature of certain spatial and other enabling conditions on her perception of those things that may subsequently fail to obtain in situations in which they therefore continue to exist unperceived.

My conclusion, 10, is that we should therefore embrace Perceptualism.<sup>6</sup>

Perceptualism depends upon the significance of the metaphysics of perceptual experience for the determination of which beliefs may intelligibly be explained by its subjective nature. There is equal commitment to this idea in Hume's objection to the Intuitive Datum. According to Hume's metaphysics, the conscious presentation of certain objects in perception consists in their simple presence before the mind. This is what motivates the claim that such presentation constitutes a basis for the intelligible explanation of belief only in the existence of such objects whilst they are so presented and therefore not of their continued existence unperceived.

From the perspective of Perceptualism, Hume's impoverished metaphysics of perceptual experience counterintuitively restricts what may be intelligibly explained by its subjective nature. The correct response is to highlight the place of Evans's Insight about the centrality of a simple theory of perception in correcting the metaphysics of perception itself in such a way as to provide the intelligible explanation of belief in the existence unperceived of its objects that Hume fails to find. This is precisely what Perceptualism achieves. The simple theory is therefore not supposed to be the *subject's* theory, either explicit in her post-experiential reflection on the spatial and other enabling conditions on her experience of what she perceives, or implicit subpersonally in the pre-experiential computation of her perceptual representational content. The idea of perceptual experience as jointly dependent upon what is there in the world anyway and the satisfaction of certain independent enabling conditions on its perception that may subsequently fail to obtain is instead constitutive

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6. I recognize that there may be two-dimensional metaphysics of perceptual experience quite different from (OV) sustaining alternatives to Perceptualism that are consistent with the argument set out above. I consider and reject an interpretation of Burge's (2010) Subpersonalism along these lines in Brewer (forthcoming, ch. 6).

of the nature of perceptual experience itself. The Perceptualist thesis is that this shows up for the perceiver herself in the intelligible explanation of her belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that she perceives.

Perceptualism emphasizes the fact that perceptual experience is acquaintance with particular worldly things *from a point of view and in certain circumstances*. In considering such experience we are often concerned with which worldly things are presented in this way; and reasonably so. This intelligibly explains many of the beliefs to which it gives rise, that those particular objects are shaped and coloured thus, for example. That the experience is from such and such a point of view and orientation in specific perceptual circumstances is equally part of its fundamental nature, though, regardless of what the objects of acquaintance may be on any specific occasion from that point of view and in those circumstances. Hence the existence of perspectival and other circumstantial enabling conditions on such perceptual experience, which actually obtain but may subsequently fail to do so, is essential to the nature of perceptual consciousness itself. What it is like for the subject in perceiving the world as she does therefore has a *form* that the Perceptualist claims intelligibly explains the perceiver's belief in the continued existence unperceived of the particular worldly objects with which it acquaints her in this way.

According to the Intuitive Datum, the continued existence unperceived of the objects that she perceives is evident to a perceiver in the subjective nature of her perceptual experience of them. The Perceptualist claims that the way in which this is so is quite different from the way in which her experience makes evident the shapes and colours, for example, of the particular objects that she perceives. The latter is a matter of which shapes and colours, of which worldly objects, she is acquainted with in her experience. The former – that is to say, the continued existence unperceived of those objects themselves whose shapes and colours these are – is a matter of the form of her acquaintance with those things: its being from a particular point of view and in specific circumstances of perception. This form is equally a component of the metaphysics of that very conscious experiential condition; and the essential role of such independent enabling conditions upon her acquaintance with those things, which may subsequently fail to obtain, is what makes their continued existence unperceived intelligible from her own point of view as their perceiver.

Perceptualism clearly raises general issues about the relation between the metaphysics of perceptual experience and its subjective nature. Although I cannot do justice to these here, I will make some brief comments.

There is a bifurcation in the philosophical literature on the metaphysics of conscious perceptual experience. On the one hand, there are debates

about the nature of our perceptual relation with the world around us, e.g. of my seeing a round red ball a little off to the right in front of me, that aim to provide an account that explains and unifies the characteristic features of perception, such as its subjective nature, its role in making thought and knowledge of the world possible, and its contribution to the systematic control and coordination of behaviour in the world. These consider the relative merits of sense datum theories, indirect realism, adverbialist and qualia theories, many and varied representational content views, and various forms of naïve realism or relationalism, and so on. On the other hand, there are debates about the place of conscious experience in the natural world that consider the relative merits of dualism, behaviourism, identity theories, functionalism, various non-reductive forms of physicalism, and so on.

A natural picture takes these to be distinct sequential stages of a single metaphysical project. The first provides a categorial characterization of the target phenomenon that illuminates and accounts for its characteristic features. The second solves for the place of that phenomenon so characterized within, or without, the physical world antecedently assumed unproblematically to exist.

The metaphysics of perceptual experience that is central to Perceptualism is the first stage of this project. Its explanatory role in relation to the subjective nature of perception plays a key role in the intelligible explanation of our belief in the continued existence unperceived of the objects that we perceive from our own point of view as perceivers. So the Perceptualist may simply accept the two-stage conception, leaving its second stage for others as a distinct and equally legitimate enterprise.

My proposal for Perceptualism is more ambitious. For I have serious doubts whether this second stage may effectively be carried out once it is deemed necessary.<sup>7</sup> In any case, I suggest that a correct execution of stage one is sufficient to provide a full account of the place of conscious perceptual experience in the natural world.

Stage one specifies the nature of perceptual experience in a way that explains its subjective nature and its psychological, semantic, epistemic, and behavioural role. I take this to be that a person's perceptual experience at a time is her conscious acquaintance, from her position and orientation at that time and in the perceptual circumstances that she finds herself in there then, with the particular worldly scene before her. Thus, all that is required to make fully intelligible the place of her experience in the world is the constituents of that worldly scene – variously shaped, textured, oriented, coloured, etc. ordinary physical objects, laid out as they are – her

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7. See Brewer (forthcoming, ch. 9) for elaboration and defence of this point and the following.

own position and orientation, and the relevant circumstances of perception. On the assumption of her normally functioning perceptual system like our own, we are then entirely capable of taking up in imagination the experiential perspective that is her own perceptual experience of those things there then.<sup>8</sup> The relevant worldly constituents together with her point of view and circumstances of perception give us access to the subjective nature of her perceptual experience by imaginatively adopting that point of view on those things in the circumstances in question. This assumes the normal functioning of her perceptual system that enables her actual acquaintance with those things from there in those circumstances. It may need adjustment or modification to take account of any disabling conditions she may face; and it may even be unclear precisely how to apply these in practice in any particular case. Nevertheless, there is nothing mysterious to us about her possession of perceptual experience at all or about its subjective nature.

The metaphysics of perceptual experience that is central to the Perceptualist account of the intelligible explanation by the subjective nature of such experience of our belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive is therefore precisely the metaphysics of perceptual experience that places that conscious experience firmly in the natural world.

### 3. DEFENDING AND ELABORATING PERCEPTUALISM

As we have seen, Perceptualism stresses the fundamental importance of the metaphysics of perceptual experience in addressing the question which beliefs may be intelligibly explained by its subjective nature. Hume's objection to the possibility that our belief in the continued existence unperceived of its objects might be included amongst such beliefs is set in his own discussion in the context of a one-dimensional presentational metaphysics on which the relata of perceptual presentation, or acquaintance, are themselves explicitly mind-dependent impressions. This immediately raises the possibility of a metaphysics that is one-dimensional and presentational, like Hume's, yet according which the relata of conscious acquaintance are supposed to be the ordinary physical objects around us themselves that do in fact continue to exist unperceived. That is to say, it may be proposed that our conscious perceptual experience consists in the simple presentation of ordinary physical objects and their properties, the nature of the experience itself giving no place to the point of view and circumstances in the world that we happen to occupy in having such experience, and which on this view play a merely causal role in our doing so. Indeed, this possibility is explicitly acknowledged in

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8. I am indebted to John Campbell (forthcoming) for this idea.

premise 2 of the argument for Perceptualism as one of the one-dimensional options subsequently to be rejected.

Yet this possible metaphysics surely constitutes a challenge to Perceptualism. For, given the agreed significance of the metaphysics of perceptual experience for the determination of which beliefs may intelligibly be explained by its subjective character, why not simply claim that the identity of the relata of conscious acquaintance as physical objects that de facto continue to exist unperceived is sufficient to account for the intelligible explanation of a perceiver's belief that those very things do so? This would make Evans's Insight and the characteristic Perceptualist insistence that this is to be implemented by the two-dimensional metaphysical appeal to her point of view and circumstances of perception, in addition to the worldly objects of her acquaintance from that point of view and in those circumstances, as partially constitutive of her perceptual experience otiose.

An initial response that I endorse would be to object directly to the proposed metaphysics. For it fails adequately to account for the wide variety in the subjective nature of a person's perceptual experience of a given physical object from different points of view and in different circumstances. On the current view, all of these are to be counted one and the same experience: S's acquaintance with o, say. Yet they are surely distinct experiences in virtue of their quite different subjective nature. From the point of view of the current challenge to Perceptualism, though, this would be a side dispute of limited relevance. For the fundamental point of the possibility of the one-dimensional metaphysics of perception under consideration is to emphasize that it is the identity and nature of the relata of conscious acquaintance rather than any second dimension of metaphysical variation involving the point of view and circumstances of acquaintance that account for the intelligible explanation of a perceiver's belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that she perceives by the subjective nature of her perceptual experience. The definitive Perceptualist insistence that implementing Evans's Insight in such a second dimension to the metaphysics, what I called above the *form* of a perceiver's acquaintance with the particular worldly objects and properties that she perceives, is therefore unnecessary. So Perceptualism fails.<sup>9</sup>

My reply to this objection comes in two parts.

First, the determinate metaphysical assignment of ordinary physical objects, as opposed to any of the relevant temporal parts of spatial surface parts of such things before the perceiver, *as* the relata of conscious

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9. Thanks to both Anil Gomes and Umrao Sethi for independently posing this challenge to Perceptualism.

perceptual acquaintance requires motivation from within the subject's conscious perspective itself. Without this it remains a brute stipulation insufficient on its own for any adequate account of the way in which the subjective nature of her perceptual experience intelligibly explains her belief in the continued existence unperceived of such ordinary physical objects. Second, the Perceptualist insistence that this experience consists in her acquaintance with worldly things *from a given point of view and in specific circumstances of perception* is precisely what is required to provide the necessary internal motivation for this determinate assignment of its relata that makes the proposed explanation of her belief in their continued existence unperceived intelligible from her point of view.

According to Perceptualism, the subjective nature of perceptual experience consists in a two-dimensional relation to ordinary physical objects rather than a simple one-dimensional relation only to spatiotemporal parts. The fact that the relata of perceptual acquaintance are indeed ordinary physical objects is part of the intelligible explanation of the perceiver's belief in the continued existence unperceived of the objects that she perceives. But this in turn essentially depends on the structuring of the relation of acquaintance by its point of view and other circumstances that constitute the form of her perception. Thus, any effective benefit with respect to the intelligible explanation of belief in the continued existence unperceived of the objects of perception that arises from the identification of the relata of acquaintance with ordinary physical objects in turn depends upon the Perceptualist position itself to which the proposed metaphysics was supposed to constitute a challenge.<sup>10</sup>

This evaluation confirms and is confirmed by the role of Evans's Insight in response to Hume's objection to the very idea that the subjective nature of our perceptual experience might intelligibly explain our belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive. Hume's objection assumes that perceptual experience consists in the simple presentation to the mind of its objects. The key moves are then, first, that such experience only constitutes a *basis* for the intelligible explanation of belief in the existence of specific such objects whilst those objects are presented in experience; and second, that their simple presentation in experience constitutes a basis for the explanation of belief only in their *existence* whilst they are being perceived. Metaphysical stipulation that the objects in question are in fact ordinary physical objects that do continue to exist unperceived does nothing, so far as I can see, to blunt this objection. Evans's Insight is to insist instead that the correct response should recognize the way in which the perceptual presentation in

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10. These ideas receive extended development in the context of a comparison with Berkeley's metaphysics in Brewer (forthcoming, ch. 8).

our experience of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive is structured by a simple theory of perception. My supplementary point in responding as I do above to the current challenge to Perceptualism is that it is only such a recognition of presentational structure, in the essential contribution to the metaphysics of perceptual experience that is made by the point of view and circumstances of a person's acquaintance with the objects that she perceives, that properly motivates the determinate identification of ordinary physical objects themselves, as opposed to parts of the surfaces of such things, say, as the genuine relata of conscious acquaintance in a way that brings their status as objects that continue to existence unperceived into view for the subject herself. This is what accounts for the intelligible explanation of her belief by the subjective nature of her experience; and the Perceptualist's appeal to the form of acquaintance in this way is essential to the account.

A second challenge to Perceptualism concerns an apparent of circularity in the relation between the motivation for the (OV) metaphysics of perceptual experience and the intelligible explanation of belief in continued existence unperceived that the Perceptualist derives from it. Our problem is initiated by the Intuitive Datum that the subjective nature of our perceptual experience intelligibly explains our belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive. This reflects an aspect of any authentic characterization of how the world appears to us in perception. It is therefore an element of the motivation for a correct metaphysics of perceptual experience that is intended to contribute to the explanation of what it is like for a subject of such experience. The Perceptualist then goes on to account for the intelligible explanation of our belief in the continued existence unperceived of what we perceive by the subjective nature of our perceptual experience of it by appeal back to the (OV) metaphysics that is in part motivated in this way. So there may appear to be an objectionable circularity in the overall position.

There is certainly a degree of interdependence between the Intuitive Datum and the (OV) metaphysics of perceptual experience as this figures in the Perceptualist account. But I claim that this is entirely benign. The Datum and the metaphysics are mutually reinforcing; but the Perceptualist solution does far more than simply reassert the Datum. First, it insists on the general role in accounting for the intelligible explanation of belief by the subjective nature of perceptual experience of the metaphysics of perception itself. Second, it elaborates the general point by offering a detailed account of the metaphysics of perceptual experience that highlights precisely how this implements Evans's Insight in the constitutive contribution of the subject's point of view and conditions of perception to the nature of her experience itself, making evident in its subjective nature

the existence of enabling condition on her perception of the particular things she perceives that may subsequently fail to obtain.

Furthermore, the case for a metaphysics of perceptual experience is significantly more wide-ranging than simply the need for harmony with its subjective nature. As I understand it, the question is ‘what is the fundamental nature of our perceptual relation with the world around us, e.g. of my seeing a round red ball a little off to the right in front of me?’. This is a request for an account of what it is to perceive that is both explanatorily adequate and metaphysically acceptable in the following senses. First, the proposed account should explain and unify the characteristic features of perception, such as its subjective nature, its role in making thought and knowledge of the world possible, and its contribution to the systematic control and coordination of behaviour in the world. Second, it should do so in a way that meets the general criteria for evaluating metaphysical theories: what is required for perception must be consistent with our best overall account of what there is. So it is absolutely not a given that the correct metaphysics that succeeds in doing all of this will in turn provide an illuminating explanation of the Intuitive Datum that the subjective nature of our perceptual experience intelligibly explains our belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive, as the Perceptualist contends is the case with the (OV) metaphysics set out above. Thus, the elucidation of a detailed and comprehensively motivated metaphysics of perceptual experience implementing Evans’s Insight in a way that is genuinely explanatory of the Intuitive Datum is a wholly non-trivial matter. This is what the Perceptualist provides.

A third challenge to Perceptualism concerns how exactly the two-dimensional (OV) metaphysics of perceptual experience is supposed to show up for the subject so as adequately to account for the Intuitive Datum. Suppose that it is granted that the correct metaphysics identifies a person’s perceptual experience at a time with her conscious acquaintance at that time, from a given point of view and in the specific circumstances of perception, with certain of the ordinary physical objects and their properties in the world around her, where the point of view and circumstances in question constitute enabling conditions on her acquaintance with those things that may subsequently fail to obtain. What makes this possibility of the subsequent failure of such enabling conditions evident to the subject in such a way that her experience therefore intelligibly explains her belief in the continued existence unperceived of the things that she perceives?

The Perceptualist’s response is quite dogmatic. The existence of substantive enabling conditions on a person’s acquaintance with particular ordinary physical objects that are independent of the existence, identity



and nature of those things is in itself sufficient for the intelligibility of their continued existence unperceived. This is the point of the insistence upon a *two-dimensional* metaphysics of perceptual experience. For the identity and nature of the relata of acquaintance and the spatial and other enabling conditions upon the subject's acquaintance with them are genuinely independent dimensions of variation in the nature of the conscious perceptual condition itself of a person's being acquainted with those things from that point of view and in those circumstances of perception. That is to say, the existence and independent contribution of such enabling conditions upon her acquaintance are integral to the metaphysics of conscious perceptual experience that explain and unify its characteristic features, such as its subjective nature, its role in making thought and knowledge of the world possible, and its contribution to the systematic control and coordination of behaviour in the world. The continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects of perception is therefore *evident* in the subjective nature of experience in a way that intelligibly explains a person's belief in their continued existence unperceived from her own point of view as the perceiver.

Is Perceptualism therefore vulnerable to the objection given above to the pre-experiential implementation of Evans's Insight in the subpersonal processing that delivers perceptual content explicitly representing to continued existence of its objects unperceived that this is simply built into perceptual experience in a way that fails to make it intelligible to the subject how and why it should be so? I would say not. The Perceptualist position is not that the continued existence unperceived of the objects of perception is simply added to its representational content as a blank assertion, as it is in the case of the views that I reject on this basis. It is rather that the intelligible ground of this continued existence unperceived is integral to the nature of the experience itself in the conjunction of independent dimensions of (i) conscious acquaintance with particular worldly things, (ii) from a given point of view and in specific circumstances.

The pre-experiential implementation of Evans's Insight is causal in relation to the metaphysics of perceptual experience, whereas the Perceptualist's (OV) makes Evans's Insight constitutive of its nature. On the causal conception, a simple theory of perception figures in the causal antecedents of perceptual experience, partially determining its nature in that way. The truth of a specific simple theory of perception articulating the detailed ways in which proximal sensory stimulation jointly depends on its distal environmental causes and the subject's changing position, orientation, and circumstances of perception plays a crucial role in the way in which the perceiver's subpersonal perceptual system computes determinate personal level representational contents from such proximal stimulation by reliably reversing the systematic effects of the perceiver's

position, orientation, and circumstances on sensory stimulation in order accurately to recover the worldly scene. That work is all done in the causal explanation of the subjective nature of her perceptual experience that is simply delivered as its result.

According to the constitutive conception of the role of Evans's Insight in relation to the metaphysics of perceptual experience, on the other hand, a simple theory of perception is essential to the metaphysical characterization of the nature of conscious perceptual experience itself rather than to its causal antecedents. This is the case on the Perceptualist's the view that a person's perceptual experience at a time is her conscious acquaintance with the particular ordinary physical objects and certain of their properties before her at that time, from her position and orientation then and in the relevant circumstances of perception. This is not supposed to be a causal explanation of her experience, but rather specifies the metaphysical nature of her conscious perceptual condition at that time. A simple theory of perception articulates the way in which the subjective nature of our perceptual experience jointly depends upon what is there anyway in the world around us and our own spatiotemporal route through it and other circumstances of perception. Perceptualism incorporates this very idea into the nature of perceptual experience itself through the constitutive involvement of the worldly relata of acquaintance on one dimension of its metaphysical variation and the subject's point of view and other relevant circumstances on the other. Thus, a simple theory of perception with spatiotemporal and other enabling conditions on perception that are independent of what is there in the world anyway and may subsequently fail to be met is essential to the metaphysics of conscious perceptual experience itself.

The dilemma facing proponents of a one-dimensional content-based metaphysics of perceptual experience is a consequence of the pre-experiential causal conception of Evans's Insight. If the role of a simple theory of perception is all behind the scenes, so far as the perceiver herself is concerned, in the causal antecedents of her perceptual experience that is simply served up whole by the subpersonal processing system, then the content of such experience either falls short of the explicit representation of its objects as continuing to exist unperceived or it does not, and there is nothing more to it than that. Either way, the proposed account of the intuitive Datum fails. The Perceptualist's constitutive conception avoids this dilemma by embodying the two-dimensions of the simple theory of perception in the metaphysics of perceptual experience. It therefore provides a fully adequate account of the way in which the subjective nature of such experience intelligibly explains the perceiver's belief in the continued existence unperceived of its ordinary physical objects.

A final analogy completes my elaboration of Perceptualism. According to a standard, non-disjunctivist theory of perception, a person's conscious experiential condition when seeing a round red ball, say, is common between this case and a case of causally matching hallucination that she cannot introspectively distinguish from it. The presence of a red round ball before her in the former case and not the latter is a difference in the causal antecedents of the common experience in the two cases. Certain disjunctivists insist instead that that particular ball is a constituent of her experience itself in the former perceptual case, which is therefore of a distinct fundamental kind from her experience in any hallucination.<sup>11</sup> There is an analogous theoretical choice to be made concerning the spatial and other enabling conditions on perception. On the orthodox view, the perceiver's spatiotemporal position and orientation and the relevant circumstances of perception are simply background conditions that contribute to the causal determination of her conscious experiential condition in any particular case, whether this is construed disjunctively or not so far as the objects of perception are concerned. The key to the Perceptualist account of the intelligible explanation of our belief in the continued existence unperceived of the ordinary physical objects that we perceive by the subjective nature of our perceptual experience of them is its adoption of the analogue of the disjunctivist's view about the objects of perception in connection with the perceiver's point of view and relevant perceptual circumstances. These are supposed equally to be constituents of the subject's experiential condition itself. And this is what provides the characteristic Perceptualist account of the Intuitive Datum with which we began.<sup>12</sup>

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11. See Soteriou (2016) for an excellent presentation of the issues here.

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