

Experiential Rationalism

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1 Summary

The main aim of my research project is to investigate the conscious and normative aspects of the mind and their complex relationships to each other. More concretely, the guiding theme of my research is to develop and defend Experiential Rationalism - the claim that our mental episodes are given to us as responses to and/or providers of reasons and, therefore, involve an experience of their rational nature.

I intend to provide a detailed formulation and defense of this view and, in addition, to illustrate its explanatory power by applying it to certain mainly epistemological and phenomenological issues concerning self-knowledge, perceptual awareness, and normative judgements. The project thereby develops further many of the themes and topics in the philosophy of conscious mental phenomena, in the philosophy of rationality and normativity, and in aesthetics, which I have been working on during the past few years, and unifies them in a single and both simple and powerful view.

The resulting position combines both rationalist and empiricist elements. It is rationalist in so far as it stresses the importance of the rational nature and, more generally, of the normativity of our mental episodes. But it also involves empiricist aspects to the extent to which it takes our awareness of the rationality of our episodes to be experiential and non-intellectual (or non-conceptual) and thus avoids problems of over-intellectualisation. Experiential Rationalism therefore stands in a tradition of views which - starting notably from Locke, Hume and Quine, and answering to challenges from philosophers like Kant, Frege or Wittgenstein - have recognised the limits of empiricism in its attempt to answer metaphysical and epistemological questions and have tried to overcome them by adding rationalist elements.

More specifically, my project consists of five parts. In the first, I aim to illustrate how the idea of an experience of rationality and, more generally, the idea of a conscious character can be understood in intentional terms. The central idea is to understand the episodes' property of being conscious both in terms of their property of intentionally presenting themselves as being a certain way, and in terms of the idea of a waking subject (or subjective perspective) to which they present themselves intentionally. In addition, I aim to develop a normative account of what it means for an episode to be intentional.

The second part of the project is meant to specify the central thesis of Experiential Rationalism and provide a first defense of it. My contention is that certain central differences in conscious character are best explained in terms of the differences in rational nature which are responsible for them. Defending this claim requires not only providing support for the idea that the resulting descriptions of character are the phenomenologically most adequate, but also investigating the rational nature of our mental episodes and, in particular, which of its aspects underlie experiential differences. I will distinguish epistemic from practical rationality and argue that our experience of agency amounts to an experience of rational motivation by practical reasons.

In the remaining three parts of the project, I intend to further support this view by showing how it can be used to address and resolve three important sets of philosophical issues. The first set is centred on the question of how self-knowledge is possible and, in particular, why we are justified in taking

our mental episodes to be our own, conceived of in a first-personal manner. My central idea is that the experience of the rational nature of our episodes involves an experience of them as belonging to a rationally unified part of our self.

The second group of questions deals mainly with the issue of which properties of objects are perceivable, and what distinguishes perceptual from intellectual awareness of properties. My proposal is to draw the latter distinction in terms of whether the awareness concerned is responsive to epistemic reasons, and to take properties to be perceivable if we can become aware of them in a rationally unresponsive way. Accordingly, the experience of the rational nature of the episodes of awareness concerned informs us also about their perceptual or non-perceptual character.

The third set of issues is focussed on the question of how we are moved and entitled to form normative judgements, that is judgements ascribing values to objects, or reasons for believing or acting to ourselves. Given the failure of desire-, emotion-, perception- and intuition-based accounts of evaluations, I aim to put forward an inferential view, according to which we recognise the presence of values by means of non-deductive inferences on the basis of the recognition of underlying reasons. And, the proposal continues, we become aware of the presence of reasons by experiencing certain of our episodes as reason-giving.

To conclude, the general goal of this project is to render plausible the idea that Experiential Rationalism - understood as a middle position between empiricism and rationalism - is well-placed to deal with many of the problems faced by its rivals. The application of Experiential Rationalism to the three mental phenomena mentioned is thereby meant to serve as only a first illustration of the resourcefulness of this view. After completing this project, I aim to extend this discussion in the future to issues concerning other mental phenomena, notably conscious desires, emotions and intentions.

2 Research Project

2.1 Introduction

My research activity in the past few years has been focussed on roughly three areas: (i) conscious mental phenomena, notably imaginings, emotions, judgments, perceptions, and mental actions; (ii) rationality and normativity in practical philosophy, epistemology and aesthetics; and (iii) central issues in aesthetics, such as the ontology of artworks, experiences of expressiveness and depiction, and the recognition of aesthetic properties and values. The research project, which I would like to put forward in what follows, develops further many of these themes and topics and unifies them in a single and both simple and powerful view - Experiential Rationalism.

Given that the proposed research project emerges directly from my past studies, I am already in the possession of substantial material - in the shape of published essays, written drafts or detailed presentations - for about one fourth of the total project. My intention is to use the three years of the fellowship to work on the remaining three fourths and to integrate them into a whole with the already existing material (cf. Section 4 for details on which material already exists, and which still has to be written). As a result, I would like to have written and submitted eight articles and one monograph by the end of the three years (cf., again, Section 4 for more details).

Experiential Rationalism. The main aim of my research project is to investigate the conscious and normative aspects of the mind and their complex relationships to each other. More concretely, the guiding theme of my research is to develop and defend Experiential Rationalism - the claim that the conscious character of our mental episodes reflects their rational nature.

Our mental episodes are those mental events, states and processes which form part of our stream of consciousness. Their conscious character consists in what they are like for us (Williamson [1990]; Martin [forthcoming]) - or, as I will prefer to say, in how we are experiencing them while having or undergoing them, or in how they are given to us in consciousness (cf. Husserl [1992b] for the notion of 'experiencing', or 'erleben' in German). And their rational nature consists in their responsiveness to and provision of reasons of various kinds. It includes, in particular, their motivational and justificatory power with respect to the rational formation of beliefs and intentions.

Accordingly, Experiential Rationalism maintains that our mental episodes are given to us as responses to and/or providers of reasons. In short, they are said to involve an experience of rationality.

Rationalism vs. Empiricism. The resulting position combines both rationalist and empiricist elements. It is rationalist in so far as it stresses the importance of the rational nature and, more generally, of the normativity of our mental episodes. As will become clear, it combines naturally with an internalist outlook on rational motivation and justification, which highlights our ability to recognise the presence of reasons and our focus on claims to rationality; as well as with an intentionalist view about the character of the episodes, which takes them to be essentially normative phenomena.

But it also involves empiricist aspects to the extent to which it takes our

awareness of the rationality of our episodes to be experiential and non-intellectual (or non-conceptual) and thus avoids problems of over-intellectualisation (Burge [2003]; Nudds and Hurley [2006]). Moreover, it claims that the similarities and differences in conscious character are best described and explained in terms of features which are, strictly speaking, non-introspectible and, in this sense, external to the mind. None the less, the experience of rationality at issue is not a perceptual awareness of the outer world, but instead a different kind of awareness of the inner world. In this respect, Experiential Rationalism differs again from more classically empiricist positions.

Experiential Rationalism therefore stands in a tradition of views which - starting notably from Locke, Hume and Quine, and answering to challenges from philosophers like Kant, Frege or Wittgenstein - have recognised the limits of empiricism in its attempt to answer metaphysical and epistemological questions and tried to overcome them by adding rationalist elements (Husserl [1992a]; Sellars [1997]; Davidson [1984]; McDowell [1998b]; Burge [1998, 2003]). This continuation is also highlighted by the fact that Experiential Rationalism receives its motivation from similar questions and problems as do some of the other views (cf. especially McDowell's and Burge's writings on the issues discussed below). In the proposed research, I intend to focus on certain of these issues, and to show that Experiential Rationalism can address them adequately, and sometimes better than its rivals.

The structure of the research project. My project consists of five parts. In the first (2.2), I aim to illustrate how the idea of an experience of rationality and, more generally, the idea of a conscious character can be understood in intentional terms. The second part (2.3) is meant to specify the central thesis of Experiential Rationalism and provide a first defense of it. In the remaining three parts, I intend to apply this view to three particular sets of issues - the first concerning self-knowledge (2.4), the second concerning perceptual awareness (2.5), and the third concerning normative judgements (2.6). These applications are intended to provide further support for Experiential Rationalism, not the least in highlighting its explanatory power.

2.2 Consciousness and Intentionality

A first task will be to make sense of the idea of episodes being given to, or experienced by, us as being a certain way. My suggestion is to treat this as a self-presentational form of intentionality: the episodes present themselves as being a certain way - just as they also present things in the world as being a certain way (e.g., when a book appears to be blue, or a table is judged to be big). This proposal involves an intentionalist conception of the character of mental episodes. For that the world and the episode itself appear to us as being a certain way, when we are consciously experiencing a certain episode, constitutes part of the conscious character of the latter (cf. Noe [2000] for an attempt to explain this). Hence, having a character means, at least in part, being intentional.

That the conscious character of episodes is to be understood in intentional terms is not a new idea (Brentano [1971]; Husserl [1992b]; Tye [1995]; Smith [2002]; Strawson [2008]; Horgan and Kriegel [forthcoming]; Dorsch and Soldati [2009]). But the specific intentionalist position, that I would like to defend,

differs from other views by endorsing all of the following claims: (i) thoughts and other intellectual or conceptual episodes possess a distinctive character as well; (ii) being intentional is a normative property; (iii) intentional self-presentation is not a form of object awareness; and (iv) intentionalism is compatible with various views about the objective structure of our mental episodes, notably both representationalism and disjunctivism.

In my previous research, I already defended claims (i) and (iv). Concerning (i), I argued there that judgemental thoughts possess a common character reflecting their endorsing attitude and its responsiveness to reasons (Dorsch [2009a]); and that the characters of judgements may even be as fine-grained as the involved concepts (Dorsch and Soldati [2006]; Siewert [1998]; Strawson [2008]). And with respect to (iv), I illustrated in another work (Dorsch [forthcoming]) that the intentionalism put forward is neutral, say, between the conjunctivist view that perceptions and hallucinations may share exactly the same functional or representational nature (Dretske [1995]; Tye [1995]), and the disjunctivist view that they differ essentially in whether they actually relate us to the world (Brewer [1999]; Campbell [2002]; Martin [forthcoming]; Macpherson and Haddock [2008]).

What still need to be addressed are the remaining two claims (ii) and (iii) about the normativity and the self-presentational nature of intentionality.

2.2.1 Normativity

In a series of recent writings (Dorsch and Soldati [2009]; Dorsch [forthcoming]), Gianfranco Soldati and me formulated a normative conception of intentionalism, according to which being a presentation, or an appearance, means minimally being subject to the norm to occur only if the world is in a certain condition. Cognitive episodes, for instance, present an object as being a certain way in the sense that they should occur only if the object actually is that way; while conative episodes present an object as being a certain way in the sense that they should occur only if the object indeed should be that way. I would like to further spell out and support this view by arguing for the following related claims:

- (a) The normativity in question is evaluative, and not deontic, and does not necessarily put any demands on the subject concerned (Burge [2003]; Dretske [2000a]).

That a perception should occur only if it is veridical means simply that being veridical is of value for it (e.g., possibly for evolutionary reasons). And a subject having a non-veridical perception is therefore not irrational (if not for other reasons).

- (b) The normativity in question is not always closely linked to the normativity of concepts (contrary to Wedgwood [2007]), given that some intentional episodes do not require the possession or application of conceptual capacities (Crane [1992]; Martin [1992]; Dretske [2000b]).

More generally, my suggestion will be that the normativity derives from a link to the value(s) of truth and knowledge, which intentional episodes have the purpose to help us to achieve (Haddock et al. [2009]). A related thesis to be

argued for is that perceptual experiences and similar non-intellectual episodes may possess a rational nature, despite not involving concepts in any significant way. The underlying idea is that the real challenge provided by opponents of the 'Myth of the Given' (Sellars [1997]; McDowell [2008]) is to ensure and explain the non-contingency of the fact that perceptual experiences can provide reasons to which judgements and beliefs are responsive to, and vice versa (cf. the fundamental question in Kant [1990] about the justification of the assumption that external objects can be given to us in perception, and that we can apply our concepts to these objects; cf. Ginsborg [forthcoming] and Cassam [2009] for further discussion). My contention is that this challenge can be answered by treating perceptual experiences as intentional and therefore normative and rational phenomena; and that the rational elements involved in perceptual experience do not amount to conceptual elements (Martin [1992]; in contrast to McDowell [2008]).

- (c) All our mental episodes are intentional in the sense of presenting themselves as reason-giving.

That is, Brentano's claim about intentionality as the 'mark of the mental' may be vindicated (though in a different sense than probably intended by him), once the focus is directed towards self- rather than world-presentation. The fundamental thought behind this is that the properties of being conscious and of being intentionally self-presentational are co-extentional (cf. Section 2.2.2 for a discussion of their precise relationship, and for a defense of this claim).

- (d) The intentionality of imaginative episodes may perhaps be spelled out in terms of metaphysically possible states of the world (White [1990]).

In particular, an image or a supposition of a circle as being square may be meant not to occur in the sense of being meant not to be used as a premiss in hypothetical reasoning. However, this view raises two problems with respect to sensory imaginings which need to be addressed. First, the fact that they actually cannot fail to conform to this requirement because we cannot, say, visualise a square circle threatens to undermine its normative status, given that subjection to a norm requires the possibility of non-conformity (Korsgaard [1996]). And second, it needs to be explained how it is possible that they may possess a purely general intentionality (e.g., just like paintings, mental images may present some apple, though no particular apple; Dorsch [2009b]).

2.2.2 Self-Presentation

Some intentionalists have argued that it follows naturally from intentionalism to assume that our mental episodes are conscious - in the sense of being conscious states - in virtue of being the intentional object either of themselves (e.g., Kriegel [2006]) or of some higher-order state (Armstrong [1968]; Lycan [1996]; Carruthers [2005]). However, as I intend to argue, this view has serious difficulties to accommodate three related facts: (i) that being an intentional object does not suffice for being conscious (e.g., trees do not become conscious by being seen); (ii) that our mental episodes are not objects, but instead modifications (or 'occupiers') of attention, at least in conscious experience and introspection (Peacocke [1999]; Martin [2000]); and (iii) that our attention is always drawn

to the external world when introspecting our mental episodes (Evans [1982]; Martin [2000]).

In response, I would like to put forward a different view, according to which for an episode to be conscious means for it to occupy part of the waking subject's perspective onto the world (cf. Husserl [1992b], O'Shaughnessy [2003], Eilan [1996], Strawson [2008] and Noe [2005] for very different ways of spelling out this idea). The underlying idea is that the subject's properties of being awake and having a perspective onto the world are metaphysically and explanatorily prior to his or her property of having conscious episodes intentionally presenting the world as being a certain way (O'Shaughnessy [2003]). This picture avoids treating our episodes as intentional objects (of themselves). In particular, it understands the episodes' property of being self-presentations in terms of their property of being occupants of the subjective perspective of a waking subject. And, as I aim to show, it is in accordance with this picture that our attention is most naturally directed at the parts of the world presented to us by our mental episodes.

2.3 Phenomenology and Rationality

In the light of the intentionalism outlined, Experiential Rationalism maintains that we experience our mental episodes as having certain rational natures in the sense that they intentionally present themselves as having that nature. In particular, two aspects of their rational role may be reflected by their character: that they provide us with reasons; and that they are directly responsive to, or have occurred in direct response to, reasons.

In a recent essay (Dorsch [2009a]), I already specified these claims and defended them with regard to judgemental thoughts and mental actions: while we experience the former both as responding to and as giving epistemic reasons, experiential action awareness involves mainly awareness of practical motivation. But I noted there also certain limits to such experiences of rational nature. First, they are fallible. For instance, not all judgements need to be actually based on reasons. Second, although characteristic for certain types of episodes, they need not be necessary, nor sufficient for having them. We may, for example, mistake a perception for an imagining (cf. Perky's famous experiment), or an actively produced thought for a passively induced one (as in certain pathologies). And third, the postulated experiences of rationality need not enable us to identify the precise reasons concerned. We may have forgotten, say, why exactly we are in the process of actively thinking about a certain subject matter.

My main consideration for endorsing Experiential Rationalism in the paper just mentioned was its power to best account for why we cannot form judgements at will. In this part of my project, I would like to put forward another reason in favour of it: namely that we can adequately describe and explain certain experiential and introspectively accessible differences in character only in terms of the idea that they reflect correlated differences in rational nature.

2.3.1 Phenomenological Descriptions

But this raises the issue of how to reach the most adequate phenomenological descriptions of the conscious character of our mental episodes. For example, we experience unbidden images differently from actively produced ones and can

notice this difference in introspection. Why should we describe this difference in conscious character in terms of an experience of a direct response to practical reasons - instead of, say, an experience of activity, voluntariness, control, effort, or volition (Eilan and Roessler [2003]; Siegel [2005])?

There are two basic methods for answering such questions. Both methods agree that we can introspectively notice the presence of similarities and differences in the characters of episodes. But only Common-Sense (or Humean) Phenomenology assumes that we need not more than introspection and, to some extent, our common pre-reflective intuitions in order to describe these marks of resemblance and distinction (Graham et al. [2003]; Bayne [2008]). Reflective (or Husserlian) Phenomenology, in contrast, maintains that these two sources of knowledge are limited and should be supplemented, or even replaced, by theoretical reflection (Husserl [1992b]; Martin [forthcoming]; Soldati [2007b]; Nudds [forthcoming]; cf. also Noe [1994] for discussion).

My aim is to argue that the latter method is to be preferred over the former, not only because of general worries about the epistemic status of introspection and intuition (Budd [1991]; Williamson [2008]), but also because of the need to provide stable and objective descriptions, which abstract from the subjective differences in intuitions and 'raw feels'. The idea concerning the last is that our experience of a difference between, say, actively produced and unbidden images remains constant, even though there is a sense in which how precisely it 'feels' to undergo such images may change from subject to subject, or occasion to occasion (Budd [1991]; Williamson [1990]).

Accordingly, my conclusion will be threefold: (i) there is an important distinction between the properties which constitute a character (e.g., the 'raw feels'), and the properties which are responsible for the presence of these constitutive properties and therefore also for the similarities and differences in character (e.g., the origin of episodes); (ii) at least in many cases, we are (able) to specify the character of our episodes in a stable and objective manner only in relation to the latter, but not the former (Poellner [2007]; Smith [forthcoming]); and (iii) the proper identification of the latter - that is, of the features responsible for characters - requires theoretical reflection.

2.3.2 Kinds of Mental Rationality

Returning to Experiential Rationalism, a refined formulation of its main claim is now possible: certain central differences in conscious character are best explained in terms of the differences in rational nature which are responsible for them. Defending this claim requires investigating the rational nature of our mental episodes and, in particular, which of its aspects underlie experiential differences. My aim is to provide support for three different claims concerning the categorisation of episodes into mental kinds, the experience of agency, and the significance of intentionality for rationality.

- (a) There is a comprehensive and detailed way of categorising our episode into mental kinds by reference to the reasons which they are (not) responsive to and/or the reasons which they (do not) provide us with.

Establishing such a classification of episodes involves a clarification of the two aspects of rational nature in terms of rational motivation (cf. Section 2.6.2) and speaking in favour of something (Scanlon [1999]). But, as I intend to show, it

also requires the distinction of different kinds of rationality and reasons, notably epistemic and practical. Otherwise, the categorisation to be proposed could not distinguish, say, perceptions as providers of epistemic reasons from basic desires (e.g., being hungry) as providers of practical reasons.

It has recently become almost standard to recognise that epistemic and practical rationality are closely intertwined (Owens [2000]; Feldman [2000]). And some philosophers have been moved by this observation - as well as by ideas originating in James [1956] - to accept that there is no significant difference between the two kinds of rationality. Typical claims include that beliefs formed for reasons of utility, rather than truth, may count as justified; or that epistemic justification is, fundamentally, a form of practical justification because, say, truth or other epistemic goals are only of instrumental value (Foley [1987]; Kornblith [1993]; Papineau).

By contrast, I would like to still insist on the presence of at least three significant differences between the two types of rationality (while acknowledging their intimate links). First, epistemic rationality does not involve, or allow for, instrumental rationality (Owens [2003]). Second, epistemic rationality does not allow tie-breaking. In particular, it is not rational to form one of two evidentially equally well-supported, but inconsistent beliefs (Harman [1999]). And third, being epistemically justified is incommensurable with being practically justified. There is, for instance, no overall answer to the question of whether a belief showing one kind of justification and lacking the other is justified or not.

My diagnosis of why some philosophers tend to overlook these differences will be that they understand agency in terms of Kantian 'spontaneity' - that is, as the employment of rational capacities on behalf of the subject, in contrast to his or her passive subjection to merely causal processes (cf. Wallace [2006] for a similar distinction). But, partly for the reasons mentioned, genuine agency and practical rationality should require more than this, namely additionally means-end justifiability (Pink [1996]).

(b) The experience characteristically linked to conscious agency is an experience of direct practical motivation.

My argument in favour of this claim builds on a particular result of my previous research, according to which experiential awareness of agency occurs only in a limited range of cases, namely actions performed without the reliance on epistemic or merely causal means (Dorsch [2009a]). What then still needs to be done is to illustrate why the conscious difference between direct agency (e.g., moving a finger, or visualising a quiet beach scene) and indirect agency (e.g., shooting someone by pulling a trigger, or relaxing oneself through imagining the beach scene) is due to a difference in the presence or absence of an immediate rational response to practical reasons.

In addition, I intend to illustrate how the proposed experience of agency can be understood as including experiences of voluntariness and control (as discussed by Graham et al. [2003], Bayne [2008], or O'Brien [2007]), given that direct practical motivation is also a mark of the latter two; and why not all experiences of agency have to involve an experience of effort (Bayne [2008]). And I also aim to address the issue of which elements in bodily agency are under our direct control, and whether they should count as genuinely mental (cf. the discussions in O'Shaughnessy [2008], Ginet [1990] and Peacocke [2008]).

- (c) By reflecting their rationality, the self-presentational aspect of the character of our mental episodes also reflects their world-orientated intentionality.

Here I plan to develop an idea which I outlined in a previous work (Dorsch [forthcoming]): that the power to provide and/or to be responsive to reasons derives from the normativity inherent in the intentionality of the episodes concerned. It is common to assume that rational relations hold in virtue of the contents of the respective states. And, according to intentionalism, the idea of a content is to be spelled out in terms of the subjection to a norm of the form mentioned above. A perception provides us with a reason to judge that there is something red, for example, by intentionally presenting us a red object. I will link my discussion of this idea to the more general considerations about the normative nature of intentionality, and about the origin of that nature in the intimate connection between intentionality, on the one hand, and truth and knowledge, on the other (cf. Section 2.2.1).

Given that episodes provide us with, or are responsive to, reasons in virtue of their specific intentionality, and given that they present themselves as having this rational nature, they may also be described as presenting themselves as being intentional in a specific way and, hence, as being subject to a corresponding norm. Experiential Rationalism can therefore be understood as a general claim about the normativity of our mental episodes: we experience them as normative phenomena both in relation to their rational nature and in relation to their underlying intentionality.

2.3.3 Outlook

In addition to the previous considerations in its favour, I aim to show that Experiential Rationalism gains some further strength from its successful application to important philosophical issues. In the remainder of the project, I focus on three sets of them, each of which is concerned with one important mental phenomenon: self-knowledge, perceptual awareness, and normative judgement, respectively.

2.4 Self-Knowledge

One of the main issues concerning self-knowledge is where our entitlement to self-ascriptions comes from - that is, our justification to ascribe our various mental episodes to *ourselves*, conceived of in a first-personal rather than a third-personal manner. My contention is that our experience of the rational nature of our episodes is the source of this entitlement.

2.4.1 Empiricism vs. Rationalism

On the assumption that we can provide a substantial epistemology of self-knowledge, rationalist accounts of our entitlement to self-ascriptions have recently gained prominence (Shoemaker [1994b]; Burge [1998, 1996]; Peacocke [1999]). What these views have in common is that they accept that self-knowledge is a matter exclusively of being in the respective lower-order states, being sufficiently rational and possessing the required concepts. They only differ in where they locate the source of our entitlement - more in our rationality (cf. Shoemaker and Burge), or more in our conceptual abilities (cf. Peacocke). In

contrast, more empiricist accounts add some further element, such as some inner observation or other form of higher-order representation (Armstrong [1968]; Lycan [1996]; Carruthers [2005]), or instead the idea of displaced perception (Dretske [1995]). I intend to critically discuss both options.

Empiricism. My first aim will be to argue that the rationalist approaches should be favoured over the more empiricist ones. The idea of an inner access to the self is to be rejected because it involves the idea of ourselves being given to us an object (Campbell [1995]; Martin [1997]; cf. Section 2.2.2), and because it has difficulties to accommodate Hume's observation that, in introspection, we find only our mental episodes, but not ourselves (Shoemaker [1994a]). The displaced perception model, on the other hand, does not have any resources (and does not attempt) to capture the self-directed element of self-knowledge, given that our self-knowledge that we are seeing that p is clearly richer in content and entitlement than simply seeing or knowing that p (Evans [1982]; Campbell [1995]; Soldati [2008]; cf. Martin [2000] for further discussion). Besides, empiricist views have in general problems with the impossibility of brute error in self-knowledge - that is, the fact that the only sources of error are our own rational, conceptual and other capacities and the possible absence of the first-order episode concerned (Burge [1996]; Martin [2006]).

Rationalism. However, I also plan to show that the rationalist alternatives presented so far face their own problems. First, testimonial self-knowledge is clearly a matter of more than lower-order states, rationality and concept possession. And we should treat testimonial and introspective self-knowledge equal because both involve the same I-concept (e.g., both kinds of knowledge can figure in a single inference; cf. Campbell [1995] for further discussion); and because there is no good reason to restrict self-knowledge to ascriptions of mental (as well as certain bodily) features, or to cases involving referential immunity to error (Soldati [2007a]). Second, as Peacocke has argued against Shoemaker and Burge, self-knowledge - just as any other form of knowledge - requires the presence of some justificatory relation, in this case holding between the conscious first-order episode and the respective higher-order judgement or belief (Peacocke [1999]; Martin [2000]). However, Peacocke's own account is also problematic because it denies any evidential role to the fact that the reason-constituting mental states have to be conscious, despite self-knowledge being knowledge of an empirical self and, hence, different from, say, a priori mathematical knowledge. In particular, Peacocke's idea that the I-concept is the source of the entitlement under discussion in virtue of its being constituted by the I-rule (i.e., the rule that occurrences of the I-concept always refer to the thinker of the respective thought) does not suffice to tell a satisfactory story about the justification of first-personal inferences (e.g., inferences of the form 'I am F', 'I am G', hence 'I am F and G'; Soldati [2007a]). Besides, Peacocke has recently postulated some perception-like awareness located in between our conscious episodes and our introspective judgements (at least in the case of action awareness; Peacocke [2008]) and therefore threatens to fall back into some non-judgemental higher-order account.

2.4.2 Experiential Rationalism

In response to these difficulties, I would like to propose another approach, which accepts the rationalist insight that the three elements mentioned - lower-order episodes, rationality and concept possession - are sufficient for self-knowledge, but also incorporates the insight that self-knowledge of an empirical self cannot be purely a priori. My suggestion is that we should look, not at rationality or concepts, but at the third element - episodes with a conscious character - when trying to discover the source of entitlement. And I hope that this approach can be applied not only to our knowledge that certain episodes are our own, but also to our knowledge that they are episodes of a certain kind (e.g., involving a certain attitude and content).

The experience of ourselves. Concerning the self-directed aspect self-knowledge, I maintain that our experience of the rational nature of those episodes involves an experiential awareness of ourselves and thus provides us with the evidence needed to come to know that the episodes belong to us. The resulting picture therefore respects not only the rationalist insight, but also Hume's observation (cf. Cassam [1999] for a similar view, but focussing on the embodied self). As I plan to make clear, the crucial element is the idea that experiencing an episode as reason-providing means, in part, experiencing it as part of a particular rational unity. And given that this unity is again part of our particular rational self (Kant [1990]), it also means, in part, experiencing the episode as part of ourselves. This proposal is compatible with the possibility of being a self with several rational unities (e.g., in cases of self-deception or, more extremely, of multiple personalities). And it can preserve the immunity to error through misidentification and the truth of the I-rule in virtue of the fact that, at least for contingent reasons, we have experiential access only to our own rational unities.

The experience of mental kinds. In addition, I would like to extend this account to the other aspect of our self-knowledge, namely our knowledge of the kind of episode concerned. As argued above (cf. Section 2.2), the experience of the rational nature of our episodes is partly an experience of their world-directed intentionality which is responsible for their interactions with reasons. And I expressed my intention to illustrate how we can achieve a rich and sophisticated categorisation of our mental episodes into kinds by reference to their different rational natures and, relatedly, their different intentionalities (cf. Section 2.3.2). When combining these two conclusions, we naturally reach a view according to which the character of the episodes is a marker for the place that they occupy in the classificatory scheme provided. My proposal is therefore that our experiential awareness of our episodes can justify the ascriptions of the relevant mental kinds in a similar way in which it can justify the ascription of the episodes to ourselves.

The informativity of conscious experience. The suggested view raises the question of the extent to which our experiences of ourselves and of the mental kinds really tell us something about their nature and identity - that is, to which extent the resulting judgements are informative (or de dicto). The issue concerns, more precisely, how we are aware of the link between the 'raw feels' which constitute the characters and the features responsible for them, while forming our

self-ascriptive judgements. As already mentioned (cf. Section 2.3.1), discovering this link requires theoretical reflection. If we use concepts informed by such reflection, our resulting judgements will be informative about the self or mental kind in question. But there are surely cases in which we ascribe different episodes to ourselves in response to noticed differences in character, despite any more theoretical knowledge or investigation of which features are responsible for the latter. I content that, in such cases, our self-knowledge is more akin to demonstrative knowledge (e.g., 'this is like that') than to descriptive knowledge (e.g., 'the table is round').

A special problem arises with respect to the identity of the self to which we ascribe our episodes. If only for contingent reasons, we cannot assign them to a self different from us, if we make our judgemental self-ascription on the basis of our experience of rational nature and unity. But this does not suffice to guarantee that we are actually aware of that self as ourselves. The case is special because any I-concept acquired by means of theoretical reflection on conscious experience would involve an identification of ourselves (e.g., as the self given to us in that experiential awareness), and this would already presuppose some more basic and non-identificational self-knowledge (Shoemaker [1994a]; Campbell [1995]). I will consider two possible replies to this challenge and argue for choosing the second: (i) to accept that the proposed entitlement to self-knowledge is, from an internalist perspective, only third-personal; or (ii) to insist that the problem arises only if experiential awareness is understood as object awareness (cf. Section 2.2.2). I hope to be able to render plausible the second line of response.

2.5 Perceptual Awareness

There is a general question of when our awareness of instantiations of certain properties counts as perceptual (or, if one prefers, as a form of perceptual knowledge), and when not. There is a broad consensus that we can perceive (or come to perceptually know) the presence of at least a certain set of lower-level properties, such as shapes, colours, movement, and so on (Smith [2002]; Millar [2000]; McDowell [2008]). What is at issue is therefore whether we can become perceptually aware also of more higher-level properties, such as the sadness of a person, the climbability of a wall, the pictorial content of a painting, the various kinds of Gestalt properties, or indeed the beauty of an object, the quality of a chess move, or the injustice of a situation (Macpherson [2006]; Macpherson and Hawley [forthcoming]; Roessler [unpublished]).

My starting-point will be the observation that an awareness of an object X as having the property F is perceptual only if it is a psychologically non-inferential response to X; and I am also happy to admit that this has to involve being currently acquainted with X (Dretske [2000b]; McDowell [1998a]; Millar [2000]). But this requirement does not suffice to rule out examples like the one of the expert chess player, who does not literally 'see' the quality of a move (just as we do not literally 'see' the point of an argument, say), even if being directly confronted with it.

The question is then which further condition to add to get sufficiency as well as necessity. I aim to consider at least the following three proposals to be found more or less explicitly in the literature: (i) X appears to be F, or X's being F becomes manifest, to us; (ii) X has an appearance which is - relative to the

form of perceptual access concerned (e.g., seeing, hearing, touch, etc.) - characteristic of things that are F; (iii) X has an appearance - relative to the form of perceptual access concerned - which is rationally unresponsive to sufficient reasons for believing that X is not F.

Appearance/manifestation. I aim to show that the simple introduction of the notions of appearing or becoming manifest does not help us to get closer to an answer to the question of which properties are perceivable (or perceptually knowable). The main problem is that the proposed notions need further specification. For, otherwise, we have no means to decide which properties might appear or become manifest to us; and we have no reason to reject the application of these notions to cases, say, in which we come to consciously judge that X is F as the conclusion of an inference (Dorsch and Soldati [2009]). However, adding a label - such as 'sensory' or 'perceptual' - would simply shift the problem (or beg the question) without any further substantial specification of its contrast with other labels - such as 'intellectual' (though cf. Smith [2002] and Soteriou [2007] for attempts at further specification).

Characteristic appearance: part I. According to one way of understanding the idea of X's having a characteristic F-appearance, it entails that all objects, which are completely indistinguishable from X relative to the form of perceptual access in question, are F. But, as I intend to show, the resulting condition is merely sufficient, but not necessary for perceiving X as F (Dretske [2000b]). It is not necessary since we can literally see that real lemons are lemons, despite the possibility that they are completely indiscriminable in vision from plastic 'lemons' made for decorative purposes. But it is sufficient with respect to colour or shape properties, given that there cannot be, say, any fake yellow objects (i.e., non-yellow objects which cannot visually be distinguished from yellow objects under any circumstances).

Lower- vs. higher level perception (or sensory vs. non-sensory perceptual appearance). Following these considerations, I also aim to defend the idea that we can draw the distinction between lower- and higher-level perceivable features by reference to this strong notion of a characteristic appearance: while the former possess such an appearance and thus rule out the possibility of fakes, the latter do not. Moreover, I maintain that there is a related distinction between two kinds of perceptual awareness: while we are sensorily aware of the lower-level properties, we are non-sensorily aware of the higher-level properties (although we are of course still aware of them on the basis of sensory awareness of the respective lower-level properties). A further defense of the existence of this latter distinction is the fact that, in perception, we are somehow aware - but not sensorily aware - of the actual presence and the mind-independence of the perceived objects and their features (Martin [forthcoming]).

Characteristic appearance: part II. In order to turn the requirement of a characteristic F-appearance into a necessary condition, our understanding of what it means for an object to have such an appearance needs to be weakened.

One way of doing this is to require that only most indiscriminable objects - and perhaps only in the subject's normal environment - have to be F as well (Millar [2000]). However, I contend that this proposal can be successfully

challenged by reference to counterexamples of the form of inverse fake barn scenarios. For instance, if all the fruit shops in my area sell primarily plastic lemons, except the one shop which I go to in order to buy my fruits, I still literally see that the real lemons in the latter shop are lemons. On the other hand, restricting the condition solely to objects that I have actually encountered leads to the wrong result, too. For if I would start to frequent the other shops and would be confronted with a lot of fake lemons without discovering their different status, I would still be able to visually recognise the lemonhood of the real lemons in the first shop. My diagnosis of this will be that the perceptuality of an awareness of the features of a given object should better not be made dependent on what is true of our access to other possible or actual objects.

Interpreting the idea of X's having a characteristic F-appearance as meaning that X would not have this particular appearance unless it were F (Dretske [2000b]) satisfies this independence requirement. But it faces another difficulty, again related to the possibility of fakes; or so I want to argue. The main point is that a real lemon might continue to have the same appearance (i.e., we might not be able to recognise any difference when, say, keeping looking at it), if it were to turn into a plastic lemon. To deal with such cases (while avoiding to restrict perceivability to lower-level properties), the proposed condition may be restricted to the world(s) closest to the actual one, in order to rule out worlds in which the real lemon has been replaced by a fake one (Dretske [2000b]). However, if there are many fake lemons in the actual world, it is not clear why such worlds should count as more distant from the actual one than worlds in which the real lemon is replaced by nothing, or by something which is neither a fake, nor a real lemon.

Rationally unresponsive appearances. The remaining idea, which I intend to defend, is to count the awareness of X's being F perceptual just in case two conditions are satisfied: (i) it is a psychologically non-inferential response to X; and (ii) how X appears relative to the respective form of perceptual access does not change in direct rational response to sufficient reasons for believing that X is not F (Crane [1992]). Coming to believe that what we previously took to be a real lemon is in fact a fake one does not rationally influence our continuing impression of its lemonhood. In particular, we keep on believing that the object concerned looks like a lemon (at least as long as we do not revise our concept of a lemon). In contrast, beliefs about X's being F (or 'intellectual appearances') get revised in the light of sufficient counter-evidence.

As I aim to illustrate further, the resulting view can accommodate the independence requirement and can make sense of why non-inferentiality is one of the marks of perceptual awareness. But it also links up with Experiential Rationalism. Since it identifies the rational nature of perceptions (which includes also their potential to provide epistemic reasons) with what distinguishes them from all other mental episodes, experiencing them as having that rational nature amounts to experiencing them as perceptions (cf. the classificatory system defended in Section 2.3.2).

2.6 Normative Judgements

The main question to be addressed in the final part of this project is what justifies our normative judgements. A related issue is what actually moves us

to form such judgements. That the two questions need not have the same answer is illustrated by the example of an experienced chess player, who may immediately (i.e., non-inferentially) recognise the quality of a certain move, although he would still (have to) justify his assessments by means of respective inferences.

I will be concerned with two kinds of normative judgements: ascriptions of values to objects; and recognitions of reasons to believe or act. There are three approaches to the justification of normative judgements of this kind: (i) to assume that it is provided by some inferences (Bender [1995]; McKeever and Ridge [2006]); (ii) to assume that it is provided more immediately by some cognitive episodes, namely some perception or intuition (Sibley [2001]; McDowell [1998a]; Huemer [2005]); or (iii) to assume that it is provided by some non-cognitive episode, such as a felt emotion or desire (Budd [1995]; D'Arms and Jacobson [2000]; Oddie [2005]).

In a previous work (Dorsch [2007]), I argued that view (iii) cannot account for the epistemic status of objective normative judgements. The main problem is that our affective and conative dispositions are not fully rational, nor fully cognitively impenetrable phenomena (Brady [forthcoming]). As a consequence, even the best epistemic conditions cannot prevent the possibility of opposing affective or conative responses to the same object or situation. We therefore have no good reason to prefer one response over the other and should either abstain from endorsing each of them, or instead accept their subjectivity (Budd [1999]).

Assuming that the objectivity of moral, epistemic, aesthetic and other values and reasons should be preserved (Hume [1998]; Kant [1990]; Kant [1994]; Budd [1995]), I plan to investigate whether options (i) and (ii) fare better in explaining the justification of our objective normative judgements.

2.6.1 Perceptions and Intuitions

First of all, I plan to highlight the fact that many values and reasons cannot be perceivable because the objects or situations to which they pertain are unperceivable (e.g., conceptual artworks, or abstract action scenarios), or because their presence depends on certain underlying unperceivable features (e.g., the originality of a novel which depends on historical features, or the goodness of a character which depends on his or her intentions).

I then aim to show that even many initially more plausible cases fail the test for perceptuality developed in Section 2.5. Our impression that a face is beautiful or an embrace kind, or that we have good reason to help the hurt person in front of us, typically changes once we come to believe that the face is ugly or the embrace cold, or that the person is not really hurt and does not need any help. And I maintain that the best explanation for such changes is that our respective recognitions of normative features are responsive to reasons - mainly because the normative features involved are response-dependent (Sibley [2001]; Budd [1995]). Perhaps certain exceptional normative features might still be among the perceivable higher-level properties (e.g., the value of elegance, or the reason to eat generated by a feeling of hunger), but the majority are not.

And concerning intuitions, the main problem is that it is not clear what kind of episodes they are (Bodrozic [2004]). If they turn out to be rationally responsive judgements which are not based on perceptual, inferential or other

reasons, then we should not trust them in the first place (Williamson [2008]). However, if they turn out to be seemings which are rationally unresponsive to epistemic reasons, then they do not really differ from perceptions of higher-level properties. For both kinds of episode are based on lower-level perception, involve a non-sensory appearance or impression and provide us with epistemic reasons, while being insensitive to them. Consequently, my conclusion will be that our access to normative features is not more intuitive than it is perceptual.

2.6.2 Inferences

The previous considerations favour an inferential view of the justification of normative judgements. The account that I would like to put forward includes the following main claims: (i) our ascriptions of values are to be warranted inferentially by reference to respective reasons speaking in favour, or against, a positive or negative assessment (Bender [1995]; McKeever and Ridge [2006]; cf. Wallace [2006] for further discussion); (ii) the inferences involved need not - or even cannot - be deductive (Sibley [2001]); (iii) we recognise the presence of reasons for others by means of inferential reasoning (e.g., on the basis of recognising related values); and (iv) we recognise the presence of reasons for ourselves by experiencing certain of our mental episodes as reason-giving and as part of one of our own rational unities (cf. Section 2.4.2).

Developing and defending this view will require, among other things, having a closer look at non-deductive forms of inferential justification (Harman [1964]; Lipton [2004]) and at the processes involved in 'internalising' inferences and thus allowing psychologically non-inferential evaluations, which are none the less inferentially justified (as in the example of the expert chess player). But it will also involve applying the previous results about the experience of rationality and the involved experience of ourselves (cf. Section 2.4.2) to the case of recognising that we have a reason to believe something or act in a certain way. In particular, I will maintain that the difference between, say, recognising that someone is hurt and recognising that we have reason to help him consists in a difference in how we experience our perceptual or judgemental recognition of his current state. And the idea is further that this experiential difference comes with a difference in motivation: it is the fact that the respective episode intentionally presents itself as a reason to us which motivates us to judge or act accordingly.

Finally, I would like to locate the resulting view in respect of certain other meta-ethical views. It differs from more empiricist views which postulate a general disposition or desire to believe or act in accordance with reasons (Hume [1998]; Parfit [1997]). But it comes close to more rationalist views which directly link a certain 'practical' way of recognising the presence of reasons with motivation (Kant [1994]) and, more specifically, introduce the idea of a moral point of view (McDowell [1998a]). It stays neutral, however, on the precise source of rational motivation: whether it resides in the recognition of the presence of a reason, or instead in the reason itself (cf. Scanlon [1999], Korsgaard [1996] and Wallace [2006] for discussion).

2.6.3 Conclusion

The general goal of this project is to render plausible the idea that Experiential Rationalism - understood as a middle position between empiricism and rational-

ism - is well-placed to deal with many of the problems faced by its rivals. The application of Experiential Rationalism to self-knowledge, perceptual awareness and normative judgements is thereby meant to serve as only a first illustration of how resourceful this view is. After completing this project, I aim to extend this discussion in the future to issues concerning other mental phenomena, notably conscious desires, emotions and intentions.

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