

# Knowledge and Reality, Lecture 20

Brian Weatherson

11/7/22

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception

Setting Up Chapter 4

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○●○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

## Section 3.1

I want to **start** today's lecture with two arguments from section 3.1, about why one might think Siegel's argument is wrong, and experiences cannot be evaluated the way beliefs can.

1. Backward-looking;
2. Forward-looking.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○●○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

## Backward-Looking

1. Experiences are formed passively.
  2. Beliefs are formed actively.
  3. Only actively formed states are assessable as rational or irrational.
- C. So beliefs, but not experiences, are assessable as rational or irrational.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○●○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

## Siegel's Response

- Premise 2 is ambiguous.
- But on any plausible disambiguation, it is false.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○●○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

## What Activity Might Be (1)

Activity might be phenomenological; we feel ourselves forming beliefs.

- But this only applies to a small fraction of our beliefs.
- And the ones it doesn't apply to are still capable of being rational or irrational.

## What Activity Might Be (2)

Activity might mean involving reasoning; our beliefs come from reasoning.

- Again, this is true for only a small fraction of our beliefs.
- You didn't reason to the conclusion that there are words on the screen now.
- But all beliefs, even the not-formed-by-reasoning ones, can be rational or irrational.

7/45

## What Activity Might Be (3)

Activity might mean involving reflection.

- Even if you didn't reason to the belief that there are words on the screen, or in any sense *reflect* before forming that belief, you *could have* reflected on it.
- Maybe belief is active in that sense.

8/45

## What Activity Might Be (3)

But again, not everything can be reflective.

- Toddlers don't have this kind of capacity for reflection, but can have rational beliefs.

9/45

## Forward-Looking

1. Experiences cannot be adjusted.
  2. Beliefs can be adjusted.
  3. Being adjustable is necessary for being assessable for rationality.
- C. So beliefs, but not experiences, are assessable as rational.

10/45

## What Might Adjustable Mean Here

1. Subject to deliberation
2. Capable of being disowned
3. Change by habituation

11/45

## What Might Adjustable Mean (1)

If we mean that the believer can deliberate their way out of them, then delusional beliefs are not rational or irrational.

- But in fact they are irrational.
- NB: I'm not so sure here; some of the cases Siegel mentions (like Capgras) feel almost *arational*.

12/45

## What Might Adjustable Mean (2)

If we mean by adjustable that they can be disowned, this doesn't distinguish experience from belief.

- Experiences can be disowned.
- This isn't in the sense that you don't have them (again, think of the checker-shadow), but that you don't act on them.

13 / 45

## What Might Adjustable Mean (2)

Note that this is a change from the previous 4 things we looked at.

- Now we're denying that experiences lack the property in question, rather than that beliefs have the property.

14 / 45

In the case of belief, ceasing to rely on a belief can't come apart from ceasing to have the belief.

- This doesn't seem right to me.
- A good juror can cease to rely on a belief from outside the court without ceasing to have it.
- There are hard questions here about what it means to rely on a belief, but they are practically significant.

## What Might Adjustable Mean (3)

Maybe we can habituate ourselves into not forming beliefs a certain way.

- But it's even more plausible that we can habituate ourselves into not experiencing things a certain way.
- We can learn to hear an instrument as out of tune, to see a face as expressing a different emotion, and so on.

16 / 45

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception

Setting Up Chapter 4

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification

17 / 45

## The Pink Drink and the Bird

Why are there two examples here and not just one?

- What differences are there between the examples?
- Why do those differences matter?

18 / 45

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○●○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

The Pink Drink and the Bird

I guess it's because she wants to be explicit that she cares about both perception of objects (like the drink) and perception of events (like the flying).

- Is there any reason to think these would pattern differently with respect to what we care about here?

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○●○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Reason-Power and Forward-Looking Power

Just what is the difference between these?

- Let's start with the text.

- Your visual experience gives you excellent reason to believe that the drink is pink.
- Your visual experience (in which the bird looks to be moving) gives you excellent reason to believe that the bird is flying away.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○●○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Reason-Power

Experiences give you excellent reason to belief in their contents (or something like them).

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○●○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Two Kinds of Reason

- Motivating
- Justifying
- Siegel, I think, interested in **justifying** reasons.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○●○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Forward-Looking Power

Again, start with some quotes

- If you form the belief that the drink is pink on the basis of the visual experience, *ceteris paribus*, you'll have a well-founded belief.
- If you form the belief that the bird is flying away on the basis of your visual experience (in which the bird looks to be moving), *ceteris paribus*, you'll have a well-founded belief.

Page 60

Experiences tend to make beliefs in their contents well-founded.

- Providing a reason for the belief vs making the belief well-founded;
- This is sort of a backwards-looking vs forward-looking distinction;
- Except it's looking forward to a backwards looking thing.

You'd think they go together fairly tightly.

- As Siegel says, experiences typically seem to have sort of both.
- And the forward-looking power might be explained by the reason-power.

Maybe if:

- (a) The reason provided is very very weak; and
- (b) There is independent reason to believe otherwise.

Maybe if beliefs can be well-founded by things other than reasons.

- We get deep into murky waters about the metaphysics of reasons here, and I'm not going to go further.
- Footnote 5 suggests this is why Siegel is not going further this way either.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception

Setting Up Chapter 4

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification

Four Theories

1. Disjunctivist/Naïve Realist
2. Reliabilist
3. Inferentialist
4. Dogmatist

Disjunctivist

- Appearances/experiences on their own have little epistemic charge.
- What has power is **perception**, where this is understood as a success term.
- This is very externalist; what is happening on an occasion, and what force it has, depends on external factors.

Reliabilist

- Anything can provide positive charge as long as it is reliably tied to reality.
- Typically, experiences are reliably tied to reality.
- There is nothing particularly special about perception.

Inferentialist

- On their own, experiences just provide positive charge for the proposition that one is having the experience.
- Extra step needed to get to claims about the external world.
- Lots of options for next step.

Inferentialist

- One choice: what is the link claim? Presumably something about reliable connection.
- Second choice: how is the link claim grounded? IBE, Basic, something else?
- Third choice: does the individual perceiver have to appreciate the ground?

## Dogmatist

- In the first instance, experiences provide positive charge for the proposition that one is having the experience.
- But unless something stops them, they also provide positive charge for external world propositions.
- And the 'something' has to be accessible to the perceiver.

37 / 45

## Dogmatist

The big difference with the inferentialist concerns presence vs absence of reasons.

- The inferentialist thinks you need a positive reason to go from Looks  $p$  to  $p$ .
- The dogmatist thinks you need an absence of defeating reasons to go from Looks  $p$  to  $p$ .

38 / 45

## How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Disjunctivism is no problem.

- In the bad case you don't have real perception, just apparent perception.
- So there isn't much charge there.

39 / 45

## How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Reliabilism isn't much of a problem.

- Provided we get the **reference class** right, the bad cases will be actually unreliable.
- Bit of a trick here about getting the reference classes right, but not a big deal.

40 / 45

## How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Inferentialism isn't much of a problem.

- Provided the 'link' is defeasible, and doesn't work in all cases, you can easily get that the support fails.

41 / 45

## How They Play with Rationality of Perception

Dogmatism does look like a problem.

- Hijacked perception lacks defeaters that are apparent to the perceiver.
- So the dogmatist thinks they have full charge.
- But they don't.

42 / 45

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○●○○

Two Dogmatist Responses

1. Maybe the perceiver could tell there was a problem; this seems optimistic.
2. Maybe dogmatism just applies to a much narrower band of properties.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○●○○

Dogmatism and Perception

Most actual dogmatists don't think we really **perceive** things like that something is a gun or a power-tool.

- They think we just perceive things like shapes and colors.
- This might be an implausible theory of perception, but it makes it seem more plausible that they couldn't be hijacked.

Two Arguments against Rationality of Perception  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Setting Up Chapter 4  
○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Four Theories of Perceptual Justification  
○○○○○○○○○○○○●○○

For Next Time

Chapter 5