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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EVA SCHMIDT'S "REASONS-FIRST" EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

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There is currently a prominent debate between adherents of reasons-first and evidence-first approaches in contemporary epistemology; the debate is about which concept – reasons or evidence – plays a more fundamental role in explaining epistemic justification. This article analyses Eva Schmidt's arguments in favor of a reasons-first approach in epistemology. Schmidt bases the normativity that justifies beliefs about the world on purported rational capacities involved in perception. The fundamental reasons that justify beliefs about the world, on her view, are manifestations of these rational capacities. Schmidt's theory is premised on the notion that perception is inherently nonconceptual and nonpropositional, whereas beliefs are propositional attitudes constituted by concepts. The purpose of this analysis is to test Schmidt's premises against findings from cognitive science on the nature of perception. Ned Block's book The border between seeing and thinking, which is used for this purpose, brings together important empirical results on human perception from the field of contemporary cognitive science. These show that, contrary to Schmidt's premises, there is evidence of concept-like cognitive representations in perception, however, whether there are 'atomic' propositions in perception is controversial. In Schmidt's theory normativity for epistemic justification relies on perception being inherently nonconceptual, however, in reality only low-level discriminatory perception is uncontroversially nonconceptual. This implies normativity in perception cannot be sustained in the way it is conceived of by Schmidt. We conclude that Schmid's approach to reasons-first epistemology cannot support a justification principle which yields reasons for grounding beliefs about the world.

Key words: reasons-first, Eva Schmidt, normativity, epistemology, Ned Block, cognitive science, perception.

"Epistemologists would do well to find out what perception is from the science of perception and to base the epistemology of perception on that scientific answer"
Ned Block: The border between seeing and thinking

Introduction. Reasons-first epistemology is viewed by Sosa and Sylvan "as the view that epistemic reasons are the sole fundamental constituents of epistemic normativity" [11, p. 1]. Eva Schmidt says a reasons-first view of epistemic justification is one "according to which the justification of our beliefs arises entirely in virtue of the epistemic reasons we possess" [8, p. 1]. Epistemic reasons are reasons that bear on whether to believe, disbelieve, or suspend judgement [15, p. 370].

On an evidence-first approach such as developed by Conee and Feldman, epistemic reasons supervene on evidence. A stronger version of evidentialism holds that an epistemic reason bearing on a doxastic attitude towards *p* consists in evidence for or against *p*, but this stronger version is rejected on the argument that "if one's total evidence for *p* is insufficient, one

has a conclusive epistemic reason to suspend judgment. This reason is not further evidence for or against p. Hence, Strong Evidentialism is false" [15, p. 370].

Reasons-first and perception. While both evidence-first and reasons-first approaches to justification face unresolved challenges, each has advantages. Of relevance is the claim that reasons-first epistemology is especially adept at explaining perceptual belief and justification, an aspect that Eva Schmidt emphasises in her arguments in favour of reasons-first epistemology [8; 9]. Epistemic reasons, according to Schmidt, are fundamental with respect to knowledge and justification, and perception is the appropriate starting point for reasoning about the world, therewith vindicating perceptual knowledge claims [9, p. 12]. Perception, on her view, is nonconceptual; it is not belief, and it is not a kind of knowledge. Perception is nonconceptual in that it is possible to perceive without the concepts required to specify the content thereof. Perception is not a belief, as belief is propositional and dependent on concepts [9, p. 12]. This is broadly in agreement with Ned Block's arguments in his book *The border between seeing and thinking*. Block concludes, based on cognitive research, that "perception is constitutively not conceptual and not propositional" [2, ch. 4]. But Block's book shows the matter is not straightforward, and *a priori* reasoning, while perhaps leading to similar conclusions, will exclude many of the results of cognitive science.

"It may seem that one could move from the claim that (1) perception is nonpropositional and (2) conceptual representations are constituted by their roles in propositional representations to (3) the conclusion that perception is nonconceptual. <…> this inference would be oversimple. It is their function in propositional representations that constitute concepts, but that does not preclude concepts functioning outside of their constitutive role in propositional representation" [2, p. 195–196].

There are many examples in cognitive science of "concepts functioning outside of their constitutive role in propositional representation", even though there is good evidence that perception is not generally conceptual. Low-level perception, which is characterized by distinguishing shapes, colors and textures, is more easily understood as nonconceptual, i.e., as perception without judgement, than high-level perception. Perceptual judgements are cognitive states (some of which are directly dependent on perception, and are difficult to distinguish from perception, as Block demonstrates. It may be thought that high-level perception – for example, seeing a dog *as* a dog and not as a collection of shapes and colors – must necessarily be conceptual, but Block argues, using empirical evidence, that it is not.

This raises the question how perception, if it is at most conceptual in a non-propositional way and therefore does not have the structural and logical properties to do so, comes to play a role in the discursive domain of propositional deliberation and argumentation. For this reason, Block states, "some philosophers hold that perception is conceptual and propositional because their best account of how we can know via our senses requires perceptual contents as premises in reasoning" [2, p. 177]. Schmidt calls this view the "perception is knowledge" view, which she rejects as mistakenly conceiving of perception as a kind of belief, conceptual and propositional. On her reasons-first view of epistemology, the "perception is knowledge" view raises questions about the *ex ante* justification of perceptual knowledge, because perception is a mental state to which the matter of justification cannot be applied [9, p. 8].

So, in what way could nonconceptual perception, if it is to play a role in reasoning, assume the conceptuality presupposed in the discursive domain? There is no quick and easy answer to this question; any investigation must combine philosophical analysis with cognitive research, as Block's book illustrates. A thorough understanding of the nature of perception as well as familiarity with empirical cognitive research on the topic will be required if the extent to which perception is penetrated by cognition is to be outlined. Nevertheless, there *is* a border between

perception and cognition, Block maintains, the existence of which is empirically demonstrable and not deducible by *a priori* theorizing alone. A good armchair approach though, according to Block, would be one that focuses on the epistemological role of perception. Perception could be taken as a justifier that is not in need of justification itself, providing *prima facie* justification for *de re* beliefs about particulars [2, p. 43], for example, beliefs about that particular tree over there having those particular leaves that have the particular color known as green, as opposed to providing justification for the *de dicto* belief 'there is a green tree'. But, he adds, the epistemic view "won't help much in deciding which representations are perceptions since in any real case in which there is a doubt about whether a state is a perception or a perceptual judgment, there will be a corresponding doubt about warrant" [2, p. 43].

Eva Schmidt's "The explanatory merits of reasons-first epistemology" is just such an armchair approach that focuses on the epistemological role of perception. There are two ways of possessing epistemic reasons, she says; justified beliefs, and presentational attitudes not in need of justification, perception being an example of the latter [9, p. 12]. Two aspects make this relevant: the first concerns epistemic reasons for believing, the second the normativity of reasons. According to Schmidt, "(A) subject justifiably believes that p just in case, one, the epistemic reasons she possesses all things considered favor her accepting p and, two, in believing that p, she manifests her epistemic rational capacities" [9, p. 11]. Perception therefore, as a basic presentational attitude which is not in need of justification, can provide the subject with epistemic reasons to believe, and in believing on those grounds she will be manifesting her (normative) rational capacities.

Schmidt draws the line between perception and cognition on the basis of conceptuality; "Perceptual experience is nonconceptual – it is possible to perceive that p without exercising the concepts needed to specify the content that p" [9, p. 12]. On the other hand, "belief is conceptual, for in order to believe that p, the subject has to exercise the concepts needed to specify the content that p" [9, p. 12]. Both perception and belief are "manifestations of epistemic rational capacities to be attuned to the world, and to have these capacities is to be sensitive to epistemic reasons", the difference being that belief "is constituted by a joint exercise of conceptual capacities" [9, p. 12]. This represents an idealized view, for as Block's work shows, the line between perception and cognition cannot be drawn on the basis of conceptuality. There are simply too many examples of conceptuality playing a role even in the basic functioning of perceptual discrimination without it being incoherent with the overall nonconceptual nature of perception [2, p. 197]. There is a difference between maintaining that perception is generally nonconceptual and claiming that perception is inherently nonconceptual; Schmidt's arguments are premised upon the latter. But it should not be assumed that because belief is related to propositions and propositions are constituted by concepts that conceptuality necessarily indicates the border between cognition and perception; instead, that border is much more complicated to delineate.

More doubtful is whether propositionally could be a characteristic of perception. Block argues against the notion that there may be noncomplex 'atomic propositional representations', demonstrating that the absence of propositionally in perception is not due to limitations in sensation. For example, in the case of ambiguous stimuli we may be presented alternatively with either x or y, yet we don't see "x or y", we don't see something as "either this or that", we see either this thing or that thing. Similarly, even when our senses are provided with x as always being followed by y, perception does not register a structured complex of the form "if x then y" – we don't 'see' conditionality. Such structured complexes, if they existed in perception, would be the basis of "atomic propositions", yet their absence shows that perception is markedly characterized by a lack of propositionally.

How can a nonconceptual conscious state such as perception then fulfil the role of a reason? Schmidt's solution lies in the notion of "rational capacities"; "Reasons-first is compatible with appealing to perceptual skills in vindicating explanations of knowledge, for we can think of such skills as part and parcel of the perceiver's rational capacities to pick up on her environment" [9, p. 13]. Presumably the 'rational perceptual capacities' are responsible for aligning perception with the environment in such a way that we can use its content as or in beliefs which would be automatically justified reasons capable of justifying further beliefs, such as beliefs about what we perceive.

In very broad terms this may be a reasonable explanation, yet the problem lies with the postulated theoretical nonconceptual perception the argument is premised upon. Low-level perception is conceivably of this nature, but the matter is how rational capacities are then to be understood. Rational capacities, as far as low-level perception is concerned, may not extend beyond, for example, involvement in recognizing a color, shape or texture as a recurring color, shape or texture, which means in a wider scope they would be expected to outperform the function they were postulated to fulfil in Schmidt's theory. The rational capacities required by higher-level perception – to see a box *as* a box – may be concept-like as in the cognitive representations Block identifies, thereby enabling perceptual judgement, however, this kind of cognition is not a feature of nonconceptual lower-level discriminatory capacities.

Perception and normativity. "Rational capacities" may be viewed as shorthand for an entire theory of perception and cognition, but the worry is that in the use of a shorthand form illegitimate assumptions may creep in. Here is one such concern. Perception is said to be nonconceptual, but also nonnormative; on Schmidt's view perception is not "the manifestation of a capacity to adopt an attitude in the light of a possessed normative reason, but rather a response to unpossessed epistemic reasons" [9, p. 12]. However, on this view perception also yields possessed reasons which are not in need of justification but are epistemic reasons from which epistemic justification and knowledge arise [9, p. 11]. Where does the normativity upon which epistemic justification rests in this case come from? It would seem normativity is constituted by the manifestation of the rational capacities in their "attunement to reality"; "Think of knowledge and justified belief as belief for a reason, which requires the believer to manifest epistemic rational capacities to connect with and to be attuned to reality, in particular capacities to form the belief that the subject's epistemic reasons favor for these reasons" [9, p. 11]. Your believing for a reason is a manifestation of your rational capacities to be attuned to reality, and your capacities, being rational, for any belief about the world, form a belief in you that your epistemic reasons favor that specific belief.

Our ability to discriminate between colors, shapes and textures is of course a long way off from providing normative reasons about "reality". Perception along these lines involves the activation of discriminatory capacities and is therefore itself epistemically neither justified nor unjustified. However, Schmidt maintains, it is precisely therefore that perception is "ideally suited to be a starting point of our reasoning about the world" [9, p. 13]. Perception – at this point lower-level perception has become generalised to denote perception in general – itself is not normative, but in virtue of our rational capacities it provides justified epistemic reasons for which no further explanation is needed [ibid.]. The argument for the normativity of perception is based on an analogy: "knowledge and perception have important structural commonalities. Both are true or correct because they are manifestations of epistemic rational capacities to be attuned to the world, and to have these capacities is to be sensitive to epistemic reasons. Perception, like belief, is geared towards attaining knowledge; it is how epistemic reasons for empirical belief are brought into the subject's view in the first place" [9, p. 12].

Yet, the normativity of lower-level perception is specific to that kind of perception; it would be a mistake to generalize from that level of perception and its accompanying normativity to higher levels of perception where cognition is more prevalent, given that increased cognitive involvement constitutes more complex perceptual functioning and is tied up with more complex normative admissions and constraints. An example may illustrate the difference. The low-level perceptual function of discriminating between different shapes (without 'having' the concepts of those shapes), say a triangle and a square, only plays the role of discriminating. A normative perceptual capacity of this kind would see two shapes that are superimposable under Shepard rotation as different shapes; it would not be able to respond to the question of whether the two shapes are superimposable (for Shepard shapes, see [2, p. 177], or online sources). Responding satisfactorily to what ought to be believed about the superimposable of two shapes will require the employment of a more developed normative perceptual capacity that incorporates the cognitive ability to rotate shapes mentally.

An opponent may say this example only illustrates inter-species normative perceptual capacity incompatibility – cats presumably are not able to rotate shapes mentally – and proves nothing about the potential transmission of lower-level perceptual normativity to higher levels in humans. Or otherwise, it illustrates intra-species ontogenetical perceptual normative capacity discontinuity. The latter occurs in the lifetime of an individual of a species when, for example, perceptual normative capacity develops with age from an ability only to discriminate between different shapes into the ability to detect superimposable. But it can be claimed, the discontinuity does not prove that basic perceptual normativity is not transmitted higher up – the transmission could occur with the development of the higher-level faculty.

There is however a distinct difference between the perceptual normative capacity of low-level perception and that of higher-level perception. Low-level perception involves the activation of discriminatory capacities, and these "cannot be adopted or revised in the light of the subject's reasons" [9, p. 12]. This way of perceiving is not "something subjects do in the light of possessed reasons. We aren't persuaded by the good reasons we have got to perceive something, we just do, as a ground-level response to our environments" [9, p. 11]. Perception here is involuntary in the sense that it is non-volitional, its normativity residing in the subject doing what she ought to do since she cannot do otherwise, as opposed to non-executional involuntariness where an agent intends to do something but fails to perform the action as a result of some handicap [14].

On the other hand, higher-level perception is characterized by the functioning of cognitive, "judgement-like capacities" which Block calls "cognitive representations" [2, p. 305]. The cognitive representations that characterize higher-level perception begin to acquire a discursive character, but this does not imply perception as it is conceived of in this context is propositional, nor that beliefs are involved. Instead, Block talks of "propositional representations" – abstract, symbolic, language-like mental structures, characteristic of higher-level perception, that "can be used in content-based transitions in which the representations can serve as premises or conclusions in reasoning" [2, p. 28]. The context is still perception, unlike for Schmidt where such cognitive capacities are already part of beliefs that are constituted of concepts; "In forming the belief that *p*, a subject jointly exercises the relevant conceptual capacities that specify the content *p*" [9, p. 8].

Tying rationality to perception. Rationality is a multi-faceted concept, difficult if not impossible to define in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient criteria. Schmidt's strategy is to tie rationality to perception – the premises of her argument consider rationality a constitutive element of capacities that align, or 'attune' perceptions to the environment. Therefore, on Schmidt's view, we lack rational control over what we perceive, making it "inappropriate

to ascribe to perception the epistemic status of being justified or unjustified" [9, p. 12–13]. Perception, being the manifestation of an epistemic rational capacity, is a presentational attitude not in need of justification, it is "not the manifestation of a capacity to adopt an attitude in the light of a possessed normative reason, but rather a response to unpossessed epistemic reasons" [9, p. 12–13]. The normativity of such reasons is derived from a presumed objective relation to the world. But it is only on a naïve realist view, and in alignment with low-level perceptional discriminatory capacities, that such reasons will track and reflect features of an independent reality without being erroneous.

The presumed certainty of this model is projected onto epistemic justification in general. Whereas lower-level perception instantiates unpossessed yet epistemic reasons, the generalized theory would expect justification to be responses to epistemic reasons the subject already possesses, and which are nevertheless manifestations of rational capacities that attune perception with reality. Perception, in its functioning in lower levels, becomes perception in general. Conscious perception "can provide the subject with reasons; and as a state that is not assessable as justified or unjustified, it can do so without forcing her to first worry about its justification <…> Reasons-first is compatible with appealing to perceptual skills in vindicating explanations of knowledge, for we can think of such skills as part and parcel of the perceiver's rational capacities to pick up on her environment" [9, p. 13].

Yet it has become clear that the intrinsic nature of perception varies from lower to higher levels. With these changes, the implicit normativity of low-level perception in its supposed attunement with reality is also transformed. Cognitive representations, when coming into play as building blocks of higher-level perception, distorts the ties that attune simple discriminatory perception to reality. Perception cannot longer be viewed as a general concept providing unassailable normative epistemic reasons in a direct and straight-forward way. Ironically, this is precisely a result of the development (phylogenetically and/or ontogenetically) of rational cognitive perceptual capacities. The normativity that characterizes Schmidt's version of reasons-first epistemology cannot be sustained in a generalized theory with its roots in low-level perception. Instead, the normativity of belief and epistemic justification, as we move from low-level perception, increasingly comes to reside in facts that are not related to perception of a simple discriminatory kind.

The illusion of a stick that appears to be bent when it is placed in water serves as an example. Low-level discriminatory capacities will identify two sticks, a bent one in the water and a straight one out of the water, even when the stick is observed as being placed in the water and taken out, assuming such capacities are unable to register temporal succession. As responses to unpossessed epistemic reasons, both perceptions are equally valid in answering to what the world is like at successive but discontinuous time-slices; alternatively, a world with a bent stick in water and a world with a straight stick out of the water. It is difficult to see how perceptions of this kind can serve as entry points to conceptual, full-blown propositional beliefs when they lack the essential cognitive features that are necessary conditions for that role.

Yet Schmidt's theory implies that perceptions are somehow capable of entering into discursive reasoning simply by being perceptions. Beliefs, on this view, are based on perception but differ from perception due to a border between perception and cognition which is drawn on the basis of conceptuality. But this in turn implies the nature of the conceptual rational capacities that manifest in reasons for propositional perceptual beliefs will have to be rigid capacities similar to the lower-order perceptual capacities if they are to guarantee isomorphic 'attunement to reality' in a way that automatically justifies such beliefs. This comes at a cost. The reasons-first theorist who ties the normativity of epistemic reasons to perception and perception to 'rational capacities'

in the way Schmidt does, cannot other than view perception as the manifestation of rational capacities that are attuned to reality in a direct, tracking, realist way that makes the associated epistemic reasons necessarily true. An unfortunate implication of this theory is adherence to a kind of naive realism that, for one, cannot explain our ability to detect and deal with simple optical illusions.

If perceptions are to feed into our discursive domain as a starting point for further reasoning, then, on the premise that human cognitive development (phylogenetically and ontogenetically) exists and is empirically traceable, such starting points will necessarily have to involve representations constituted by higher-level perceptual capacities structured in a way that manifests a cognitive capacity capable of isolating these perceptions and the salient features that make them available for reasoning and discourse – for example, "a stick as bent when it is in water", "the same stick as straight when it is out of the water", recognizing identity, temporality, and so forth. As perceptive capacities increase in cognitive complexity, the nature of epistemic reasons for believing and of normativity accordingly change. In general, cognitive representations are acquired when perceptual representations (which are iconic, nonconceptual and nonpropositional) become, as Block theorizes, "enclosed" in a "cognitive envelope" that adds conceptual and propositional structure to the original perceptual content, allowing it to be used in reasoning and decision-making [3].

Origin of cognitive capacities. Whereas the perceptual capacities enabling the discriminatory abilities of lower-level perception can be considered rigid and static, the cognitive capacities that facilitate cognitive representations should not be considered so. Ontogenetically, within the lifetime of an organism, learning plays an important role in this regard. In learning, selective attention to relevant features of sense experience become integrated with memory, developing task-specific capacities. Through generalization and abstraction, the ability to form higher-level, task independent representations develop [13]. Phylogenetically, human perceptual systems evolved from the simple, rigid forms of processing possessed by lower organisms to the more complex ones possessed by higher animals such as primates, and ultimately, humans.

While the early, basic stages of perception are largely cognitively impenetrable and not influenced by beliefs, desires, or knowledge, the cognitive capacities characterizing higher-level perception are very much so influenced. The term "culturally influenced" may be used to refer to acquired cognitive capacities, encompassing world views, theories, ideologies, and knowledge accumulation. This implies the nature of the cognitive envelope may vary between cultural settings, as well as within the same cultural setting due to different degrees of success in learning.

Postulating a homogeneous perceptual faculty that is inherently nonconceptual is at odds with what cognitive science tells us about perception. Tying normativity and rational capacities to perception is therefore problematic, as it implies an empirical, but still naive realist world view which begs the very question of determining a theoretical framework under which to interpret the results of perception. On Schmidt's view the possession of a perceptual faculty is *ipso facto* a sign of the manifestation of an epistemic rational capacity which is naturally "attuned to the world" – it would seem the sheer possession of the faculty is a source of normativity, regardless of the content it produces. When we acknowledge the existence of higher levels of perception and the role of cultural influence in cognitive perception, it becomes clear the source of normativity cannot be a nonconceptual perceptual faculty as is conceived of in Schmidt's theory. Normativity needs to account for the empirically observable characteristics of that faculty, which also result from cultural factors. Accounting for these will necessarily result in a view of normativity in perception that is not universal, contrary to what

the Schmidt model attempts to propose (this besides apparently presuming that rationality is a standard universal human phenomenon).

An opponent may argue that cognitive capacities, as they developed and became embedded in societies and in minds, whether through learning or evolution or social and cultural conditioning, still represent in their totality a static complex capable of fulfilling the part of normative capacities justifying perceptual reasons as required by Schmidt's theory. However, the fact that cognitive capacities do exhibit a history shows there cannot be a necessary link of a justificationary kind between perception and the full-blown propositional beliefs we acquire through perception based upon a wholesale nonconceptual notion of perception. The presumed inherent nonconceptuality of perception at the core of Schmidt's theory is hailed as an ideal starting point for discussion about the world, however, this does not indicate an empiricist feat, instead it serves as a theoretical mechanism affirming the "manifestation" of "rational capacities" in relation to all perceptual experience, thereby guaranteeing "perceptual experience" as an ontological type a role in grounding reasons for beliefs about perception.

Reasons-first and circularity. Another problem that plagues reasons-first epistemology is circularity. It is argued here that the normativity of perception and knowledge acquisition cannot be accounted for in terms of the attunement of low-level perception to the environment. The answer is not to deny the role of perception in our belief and knowledge acquisition processes, but rather to re-assess its role in the light of the findings of cognitive empirical research. The reasons-first proponent may counter that by the term "perception" she really refers to a comprehensive cognitive-philosophical theory of perception that accommodates all levels of perception, and that by epistemic rational capacities she means cognitive perceptual capacities that function in accordance with such a theory. But then the opponent will have to explain, on pain of circularity, how the entire perceptual process produces reasons on which the agent bases beliefs, when these are manifestations of rational capacities which already 'prescribe' what the agent would believe. For on this picture the agent has no choice in what to believe, and talk of reasons therefore is futile. One therefore suspects that, since the threat of circularity is not addressed, and since it is indeed a common objection to reasons-first epistemology, the interpretation that on Schmidt's model low-level perception is assumed to transmit normativity to higher levels must be correct. On the interpretation that higher levels of perception involve cognition and do not inherit normativity directly from lower-level perception a circularity need not arise, since higher-level cognition can be open to influences from sources other than perception. But tying reasons-first epistemology to perception in such a way that the beliefs (constituted of concepts) arising from higher-level perception are manifestations of justification providing epistemic rational capacities in a similar way that lower-level discriminatory capacities enable perceptual discrimination makes circularity unavoidable.

Perception, beliefs and normativity. Cognitive representations, being nonpropositional, or at most atomically propositional, cannot determine the full structure and content of the propositions that are the focus of propositional attitudes such as beliefs. When looking out the window and seeing a green tree in the garden I may have a cognitive representation of a green tree and one of a garden. I may furthermore have a cognitive capacity that allows me to identify things as being inside a certain setting, but I cannot have a specific cognitive representational capacity that yields the structured representation "there is a green tree in the garden", otherwise I would have to have a perhaps infinite number of cognitive representational capacities each yielding a differently structured representation with different contents related to what I see outside, for example, "there is a green tree and the sky is blue", "the blue sky is above the green tree", etc.

Instead, the contents of our propositional attitudes are constituted of cognitive representations that are selected and placed in relations to others, thereby creating their syntactical structure, this in response to questions, discussions, deliberations and reasoning – not only with other agents but also in the inner speech of an agent. My belief that there is a green tree in the garden when looking out the window is a response to questions I pose to myself which I may not even be aware of, for example, "what is there in the scene outside I want to or am compelled to think of the sky, the birds, the tree?" To think of perceptual beliefs in the way they are normally conceived of, i.e., as propositions that are causally produced in fully structured format, is not only misleading but also wrong – perceptual representations are caused, but the world does not consist of objects ordered in a way that could, for example, cause the structured proposition "there is a tree in the garden".

The character of normativity in perception changes in relation to the level of perception under discussion. As perception changes from perceiving what one does because one cannot do otherwise in lower-level stages to perceiving what one does due to discursive pressures in higher-level perception, normativity changes from being involitionist, but to what? What is certain from the discussion above is that what one perceives in the higher stages of perception, where cognitive representations are assembled into structured wholes, is that these higher stages of perception cannot be unequivocally labelled as involitionist. Blameworthiness, on the other hand, as a measure of normativity, becomes a strong criterion for justification. Here "the question of whether the subject has good reasons so to believe can legitimately be raised" [9, p. 8] Theories, ideologies and world views are all based on discussion, reasoning and deliberation, and these processes employ propositions made up of concepts that have their roots in cognitive representations. But it is the propositions and what they purport to convey through the way concepts are put together that one can be blamed or praised for, not the cognitive representations themselves. However, blameworthiness as a condition for epistemic justification usually attracts the criticism that an agent can only be blameworthy as far as belief is voluntary. This brings us to the last point of discussion.

Perception, determinism and doxastic voluntarism. Perceptual beliefs, which are manifestations of epistemic rational (conceptual) capacities on Schmidt's theory, are constituted of concepts, in this case cognitive concepts pertaining to our perception in its "attunement" to the world. If the epistemic reasons we come to possess through these capacities are to serve as reasons that justify our perceptions, then these reasons, being *beliefs*, imply that perception must have the advanced features of being propositional, as well as being conjunctive, disjunctive, conditional, negative, and universal. The problem is that perception having these features cannot be empirically defended, as Ned Block demonstrates [2, p. 198].

When perception is conceived of as employing rigidly structured rational capacities throughout its multi-levelled functioning, thereby directly producing full-blown propositional beliefs, determinism follows by implication. The converse is also true; when perception is conceived of as directly producing full-blown propositional beliefs, it would indicate that rigidly structured rational capacities throughout its multi-levelled functioning are present, and determinism likewise follows. In Kant's philosophy, the postulation of space and time as *a priori* categories that determine the nature of our perceptions implies a causal determinism, which Kant views as a necessary condition for experiencing the spatial features of objects and their participation in temporal ordering [6, p. 62–65]. In Schmidt's theory all perception is nonconceptual, and by implication, noncognitive. Cognition and conceptuality enter through cognitive capacities that yield reasons which are aligned with perception, but there is no theoretical structure that links the content of the reasons with the content of the perception,

except that the reasons arise simultaneously with the perception. However, the same implications follow from this scheme as that which characterise Kant's philosophy. In a similar way the justifying reasons supposedly accompanying perceptions in their role as syntactically structured and full-blown propositional beliefs shape perceptual experience and leave it fully determined as far as its outcomes are concerned.

Cognitive science tells a different story. The notion of perception is not exhausted by the structuring and determinative features of lower-level discriminatory functioning and higher-level cognitive representations. There is a cognitive "editing" aspect to perception that is premised upon denying that full propositional content accompanies perceptual experience. If perception is not propositional it cannot be deterministic, which means there can be no causal propositional isomorphism between a field of sensory experience and what is believed based on the perceptual experiencing of that field. This itself does not imply there are no perceptual beliefs, it implies that our stereotypical view of perceptual beliefs arising spontaneously from sensation does not portray the full story. If the full-blown propositional beliefs that arise from perception result from assembling cognitive representations by free association into a structured whole, perception can no longer be considered deterministic. This is an important result regarding perception, and one that helps to undermine the perceptual primacy strand of the doxastic involuntarism thesis.

Conclusion. Reasons-first epistemology theorizes that reasons play a fundamental role in justifying belief. On Eva Schmidt's version of reasons-first epistemology the normativity of reasons resides in perception and the manifestation of rational capacities. At the heart of her theory is a concept of perception that is at odds with the results of cognitive science. When the findings of cognitive science are considered, it becomes clear that perception cannot play the normative and justificatory role it is required to play in her theory of reasons-first epistemology. This conclusion affects only Schmidt's version and is not a verdict against reasons-first epistemology *per se*.

Notes.

1. In the case of the Necker cube we see a cube with the front vertex closer to us, or, when the image flips around, the rear vertex closer to us.

2. The success of this example depends on whether the ability to rotate shapes mentally necessarily involves concepts and beliefs. But this is not essential to the point; any example may be offered where a higher-level normative capacity that indubitably does involve concepts and beliefs develop from a lower-level capacity. A standard example of this kind would be the Sally-Anne "false belief test" [1].

3. Robert Nozick cites Micael Polanyi as viewing "rationality as embedded within a context and playing a role as one component along with others, rather than as an external, self-sufficient point that judges everything [7, p. 123].

4. The point relates to structured and unstructured thought in general. Jerry Fodor developed the theory of a "language of thought" to deal with the problem that, if thought is structured, we would not be able to infer from "Mary loves John" to "John loves Mary" as containing information about the same two people [2, p. 221]. If thought is structured, we would have to be able to form and retain a potentially infinite number of beliefs.

5. This added fuel to the freedom-of-will versus determinism debate, with Kant determining freedom as to be found in conceiving of the *noumenon*, in opposition to the deterministic conception of the *phenomenon*. However, Schmidt's theory does not have such conceptual postulates available to escape determinism.

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КРИТИЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ЕПІСТЕМОЛОГІЇ «СПОЧАТКУ ПРИЧИНИ» ЄВИ ШМІДТ У СВІТЛІ КОГНІТИВНОЇ НАУКИ

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Наразі точиться активна дискусія між прихильниками підходів підходу «спочатку причини» та «спочатку докази» в сучасній епістемології; дебати стосуються того, яке поняття – «розум» чи «докази» – відіграє більш фундаментальну роль у поясненні епістемічного виправдання. У статті аналізуються аргументи Єви Шмідт на користь підходу «спочатку причини» в епістемології. Шмідт обґрунтовує нормативність, яка виправдовує переконання про світ, на передбачуваних раціональних здібностях, задіяних у сприйнятті. На її думку, фундаментальні причини, що виправдовують переконання про світ, є проявами цих раціональних здібностей. Теорія Шмідт ґрунтується на уявленні про те, що сприйняття фактично є неконцептуальним і непропозиційним, тоді як переконання є пропозиційними установками, що складаються з концептів. Метою цього аналізу є перевірка припущення Шмідт на основі результатів когнітивної науки про природу сприйняття. Книга Неда Блока “The border between seeing and thinking”, яка використовується для цієї мети, об’єднує

важливі емпіричні результати з людського сприйняття з галузі сучасної когнітивної науки. Результати показують, що, всупереч припущенням Шмідт, існують докази когнітивних представлень, схожих на концепції, однак думка про те, чи існують «атомні» пропозиції у сприйнятті, є спірним. У теорії Шмідт нормативність для епістемічного виправдання спирається на те, що сприйняття фактично є неконцептуальним, однак насправді лише низькорівневе дискримінативне сприйняття є беззаперечно неконцептуальним. Це означає, що нормативність у сприйнятті не може бути підтримана в тому вигляді, як її уявляє Шмідт. Ми доходимо висновку, що підхід Шмідт до епістемології, заснованої на причинах, не може підтримати принцип виправдання, який надає підстави для обґрунтування переконань про світ.

Ключові слова: «спочатку причини», Єва Шмідт, нормативність, епістемологія, Нед Блок, когнітивна наука, сприйняття.

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