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## An Empirical Analysis of Perceptual Judgments

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### Erratum

On p. 27  $\Gamma e(v) = \Gamma e'(v)$  has been changed to the correct form of  $\Gamma e(v) = \Gamma e'(v)$

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## AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTUAL JUDGMENTS

*Rationalism and Reformed Empiricism*

**ABSTRACT:** This paper is a defense of Reformed Empiricism, especially against those critics who take Reformed Empiricism to be a viable account of empirical rationality only if it avails itself of certain rationalist assumptions that are inconsistent with empiricism. I argue against three broad types of criticism that are found in the current literature, and propose a way of characterising Gupta's constraints for any model of experience as analytic of empiricism itself, avoiding the charge by some (e.g. McDowell, Berker, and Schafer) who think that the constraints are substantive.

### 1. AN OUTLINE OF REFORMED EMPIRICISM

#### 1.1. *Introductory Remarks*

The following paper offers a defense of Reformed Empiricism as formulated by Anil Gupta in his (2006a). In particular, it is an argument (or rather, a series of arguments and considerations) against the view that Reformed Empiricism is only a reasonable epistemological position insofar as it rests on key commitments of a rationalist sort, especially of Kantian epistemology, principal amongst them (1) the view that concepts must operate inextricably within experience itself if we

are to avoid the so-called “myth of the given”, and (2) that Reformed Empiricism assumes substantive claims of an *a priori* sort regarding our views of the world. In §1, I offer a brief overview of the main theses and commitments of Reformed Empiricism in order to orientate the reader who might have only a passing acquaintance with Gupta's epistemology. The more substantive part of the paper is found in §§2-4, each section being devoted to a different family of criticisms of Reformed Empiricism in the current literature. In these sections I argue that Reformed Empiricism is distinct from neo-Kantian rationalism, and that it is formulated without recourse to substantive *a priori* claims; in particular, I argue that Reformed Empiricism can maintain a view of the given in experience that is conceptually neutral, yet epistemologically significant, contrary to the claims of many of its critics.

While I hope this paper serves as a fairly thorough survey of the literature, its primary goals are more than exegetical. In particular, I offer throughout §§2-4 supplements to, and explications of, Gupta's own responses to his critics. I also offer in §3 and §4 a novel way of conceiving of Reformed Empiricism relative to neo-Kantian theories of empirical rationality. In §4 in particular, I propose a way of characterising Gupta's constraints on any account of experience as analytic of our understanding of empiricism, avoiding a common criticism of Gupta's use of his *Equivalence* constraint — that constraint which establishes *a priori* the equivalence of subjectively identical experiences. I also close with some remarks about how we ought to consider Reformed Empiricism as a methodological advance in epistemology.

#### 1.2. *The Machinery of Reformed Empiricism*

Applying the interdependence logic developed by himself and Nuel Belnap,<sup>1</sup> Anil Gupta proposes a new empiricism based on the interdependence of beliefs (which comprise part of what Gupta calls a “view” of the world) and experience — or, more precisely, the rational contribution of experience to knowledge, also known as the given in experience. The goal is to preserve many key commitments of classical empiricism without relying on many of the problematic assumptions of those earlier projects.

The key conceptual commitments of the account are few in number. The first is the “Insight of Empiricism”, which states that “experience

is our principal epistemic authority and guide.” (Gupta 2006a, p. 3) Another is “Multiple-Factorizability”, which states that the “subjective character of experience — how things seem to be in experience — is a product of two factors: how things are, and our state and position in the world.” (Gupta 2006a, p. 5) Each experience is the result of a possible infinity of “world-self combinations”, none of which can be uniquely determined by examining a given experience.

There are also four constraints to be observed. The first, *Existence*, commits one to the rational contribution of experience: “Something is given in each experience; that is, each individual experience makes a rational contribution to knowledge.” (Gupta 2006a, p. 19) The second is *Equivalence*. This constraint asserts that “[i]f  $e$  and  $e'$  are subjectively identical experiences of an individual, then the given in  $e$  is identical to the given in  $e'$ .” (Gupta 2006a, p. 22) We will return to *Equivalence* as the principal object of our study below. The third constraint is the *Reliability* of experience, or the view that “the given in an experience does not yield anything false or erroneous; in particular, it does not yield a false proposition.” (Gupta 2006a, p. 27) The fourth constraint, *Manifestation of the given*, insures that a certain class of models of experience that trivially satisfy the first three constraints is blocked: “The given in experience must be manifested in that experience; that is, it must depend systematically upon the subjective character of the experience.” (Gupta 2006a, p. 30) This constraint precludes one from assigning some trustworthy material truth as the given in each experience.

The Cartesian-*cum*-empiricist model of experience holds that if the constraints are to be respected, especially the *Reliability* constraint, then we are given in experience a set of facts about private and privileged entities via direct awareness.<sup>2</sup> Classical empiricists adopted such a model because it was thought necessary if one were to satisfy the Insight as well as the *Reliability* constraint. If the Insight is to be satisfied, then experience (it was thought) must be propositional, since only propositions can enter into the logical relationships necessary for justifying (propositional) knowledge. If *Reliability* is to be observed, then the propositions provided by experience must be unmistakably true — i.e. the indubitable stuff of introspection. *Equivalence* then follows, since identical experiences would yield identical propositions.

Gupta thinks that an empiricist need not adopt this Cartesian model. On his model, the given is assigned a new logical form. Rather than thinking of it as propositional, the given is thought of as a function — mapping us from our present view of the world, complete with the concepts employed in one’s beliefs (whatever they may be), to a set of perceptual judgments. This set of perceptual judgments (and the epistemic entitlement one has to them) is sensitive to one’s view, and can be represented using the function  $\Gamma_e(v)$ , where “ $\Gamma_e$ ” are the judgments licensed by experience  $e$ , given view  $v$ . In spite of its rich phenomenology, experience is conceptually *neutral*. While perceptual judgments obviously employ various concepts, experience itself is non-conceptual; in fact, it isn’t even of the right logical character to admit of concepts or classical forms of conceptual analysis, since it is a function.

Because the given is hypothetical in nature, an experience can only license categorical entitlements if we are in a position to say whether or not we have rational entitlement to the view generated by it. The fundamental problem for empiricism on such a model of experience is this: Multiple-Factorizability seems to preclude experience from fulfilling this most fundamental role. It casts doubt on the broad epistemological role granted to experience by the Insight. So how do we break out of the epistemic circle created by the Insight and Multiple-Factorizability? Gupta’s solution is to think of the justification of our beliefs as a fundamentally *dynamical* process. It is not any single experience that justifies the view of the world we hold (or any single belief in that view, or the conceptual systems employed within it), but the process of revision our views undergo relative to all of the possible starting points (“initial views”) that can be revised (in light of experience) to *converge*<sup>3</sup> on some idealised version of our common-sense understanding of the world. If all initial views, no matter their initial differences, can converge on the same view (given a sequence of experiences  $E$ ), then we can take ourselves as more than conditionally entitled to hold such views.

Certain dynamical properties of *revision sequences* allow us to move from merely conditional to categorical entitlements (even though experience maintains its hypothetical character). Let  $E$  represent a structured set of experiences, otherwise known as a series of experiences. If, in the course of revision of view, the epistemic agent arrives *stably*<sup>4</sup> at

a belief  $q$  as part of her mature view  $v_x$  (as a result of successive revisions of her view in light of  $E$ ), and if other revision processes with alternative initial views also converge on  $q$  in light of  $E$  (in spite of the difference and disagreements between initial views), then we have categorical entitlement to  $q$  based on experience.

Thus, experience can play its principal role in justifying our view of the world — in spite of its hypothetical character. Also, the hypothetical nature of the given allows us to hold three theses that are often taken to be mutually exclusive: (a) experience is non-conceptual; (b) perceptual judgments employ concepts; and (c) our concepts “influence” our experience, so that the same experience can yield different perceptual judgments, though this does not entail that the rational contribution of the given itself is different—in fact, we assume otherwise via *Equivalence*.

### 1.3. *The Critical Reception of Reformed Empiricism*

Reformed Empiricism has widely been regarded as an important and very nuanced advance in the epistemology of experience. Nevertheless, the view has been the subject of much critical reflection in the recent literature. Critiques of Reformed Empiricism have largely been concerned with three aspects of Gupta’s work. The first set of critiques is concerned with how it can be that convergence of views delivers us a true conception of the self and world. These criticisms come in two varieties. The first variety claims that even if a set of disparate initial views do converge on the same view in light of a series of experiences  $E$ , such convergence fails to deliver us the *uniquely true* and non-circuitously justified conception of the self and world we want (Fernández 2009; Abad 2009). Call such criticisms of convergence “strong convergence criticisms”, since they hold that even if convergence does occur, it does not grant any epistemic entitlements. The second variety of critiques of convergence argues that there is no way for Gupta to block a set of initial views which are solipsistic or sceptical. Neta (2009); Berker (2011); Schafer (2011) call such critiques “weak convergence criticisms”, since they do not call into question the entitlements that convergence would grant the epistemic agent were convergence actually to occur — they merely question the possibility of such an occurrence given the rationality and admissibility of (at least some modified)

solipsistic and sceptical views as initial starting points. I take Neta’s criticism to be representative of weak convergence criticisms, and I respond to his arguments in detail.

Secondly, there are critiques that focus on alleged infelicities with one or more of Gupta’s constraints, usually with reference to an alternative account of empirical rationality. Call these “architectonic criticisms”, since they argue against the very formulation of Gupta’s empiricism relative to his constraints. We will offer particularly close examinations of McDowell’s criticism of Gupta’s use of *Equivalence*, and Peacocke’s criticism that there is a fundamental problem with the *Reliability* constraint. We will also look at Peacocke’s claim that Gupta’s notion of revision fails to be “ratifiable”, and therefore cannot be rational.

Thirdly and lastly, there are a group of criticisms that accept Gupta’s constraints and his account of convergence (in at least provisional ways), but argue that the system itself is not faithful to empiricism. This family of critiques questions the substantial role left for rationality within Reformed Empiricism. Call these criticisms “*a priori* criticisms”. Here we will pay especially close attention to criticisms from Berker and Schafer. They argue that Reformed Empiricism makes ineliminable use of synthetic *a priori* principles that ought to be unpalatable for the empiricist.

I will devote a section to each of these three taxa of criticisms. The sections differ as regards emphasis and purpose. §2 is largely expositional, offering representative accounts of a very common criticism in the literature regarding Gupta’s treatment of sceptical and solipsistic views. Because Gupta has adequately responded to these criticisms, very little new is on offer, though I do provide a new and more powerful response to Neta’s challenge. §3 and §4, while offering what I hope is a thorough exposition of the literature, house the majority of the novel contributions of this paper.

## 2. CRITICISMS OF CONVERGENCE

### 2.1. *Weak Convergence Criticisms*

As stated above, criticisms of Gupta’s use of convergence come in two varieties: weak and strong. I begin here with a representative of weak convergence in Neta (2009). Neta argues that Reformed Empiricism

cannot adequately ground Gupta's notion of unconditional rational entitlements because there is a class of sceptical positions that will always upset convergence. Here is Gupta's definition of convergence:

*V* and *V'* converge iff there is a stage *n* [of the revision process] such that, for all stages  $m \geq n$ ,  $V_m$  is virtually identical to  $V'_m$  — that is,  $V_m \approx V'_m$ ; the least such *n* will be called the convergence point of *V* and *V'*. (Gupta 2006a, p. 93)

Convergence is thought to give us unconditional entitlement/obligation if the empiricist can (i) “formulate and justify specific requirements of admissibility on [initial] views” and (ii) “maintain that views that meet these requirements will converge under the force of experience.” (Gupta 2006a, p. 160) Neta argues that it is impossible to maintain (ii) in light of the failure of (i), and Gupta has not come up with adequate admissibility requirements that will block the relevant class of solipsistic and sceptical views. In short, not all admissible views will converge, and therefore convergence cannot be taken to provide us with a core of judgments to which we have unconditional epistemic entitlements. This is because not all solipsistic and sceptical views are *pathological*, and non-pathological views are admissible.

Gupta rejects classical philosophical solipsism and scepticism as initial starting points for revision since, he argues, both are thought to be rigid and non-receptive: no matter what the course of experience, such views will not change in any substantial way. Nothing can convince the solipsist that the things and persons she encounters are anything but creatures of her own mind; nothing can convince the sceptic that there is a real world acting on her senses. However, Neta argues that Gupta has too narrowly defined solipsism and scepticism for his purposes. Solipsistic and sceptical views come in a variety of forms, and some are not insensitive to revision based on experience.

Let us take a look at Neta's comparison of pathological and non-pathological solipsism. Take a classical solipsistic view. According to this view, the world is nothing except what exists in my own conscious experience. There are no external objects, no other persons, and no other minds: only phantasms of my own imagination (or some other mental faculty). Call this view *S*. By Gupta's standards, it is clear that no experience (or chain of experiences) can upset *S*. It is rigid, and therefore inadmissible as a starting point for revision. But, Neta argues, the

solipsist may modify her position. He gives the following two possible modifications, *S'* and *S''* (Neta 2009, p. 485–486):

Let *S'* be a view that says the following: if I have a visual experience of a particular shade of orange uninterrupted for precisely 10 seconds, then there is an omnipresent, sempiternal divine being, and otherwise there is nothing but my own experiences.

Let *S''* be a view that says the following: if I have a visual experience of a particular shade of orange uninterrupted for 10 seconds, then there are things distinct from my experiences that are causing me to have those experiences; if I have a visual experience of a particular shade of orange uninterrupted for 20 seconds, then the only things that exist are my present experiences; and otherwise, there is no basis for deciding between these two possibilities.

Both *S'* and *S''* are revisable in light of experience, and therefore count as admissible views. And, quite troublingly for Gupta, their existence seems to ensure that not all antecedently rational views will converge given a sequence of experiences. This puts in jeopardy the convergence of all possible initial views given a series of normal experiences *E*, and thus calls into question Gupta's move from the conditional entitlements of any view whatsoever to the unconditional entitlements licensed by convergence.

Neta's criticisms are strong, for they put Gupta into something of a dilemma. Either Reformed Empiricism admits of modified solipsistic views, making categorical judgments impossible, or it blocks such modifications. If Gupta chooses the first horn of the dilemma, then Reformed Empiricism only gives us hypothetical entitlements, not knowledge; if he chooses the second, then Reformed Empiricism seems arbitrary, since there are no principled grounds for preventing such views from entering into revision sequences as initial views. Neta has been careful to show that *S'* and *S''* are sensitive to experience — that experience can occasion a change in view with the consequence that the view after experience *e* (the 10 second sensation of orange) is fundamentally different from the view before *e*. Reformed Empiricism is in the unenviable position of not being able to arrive at unconditional entitlements without some

unmotivated decision to make such views inadmissible.

But have the modified solipsist views  $S'$  and  $S''$  shown what Neta thinks they have shown? Gupta thinks not. In his (2009b), Gupta argues that Neta shows  $S'$  and  $S''$  to be non-rigid (i.e. sensitive to experience); however the views are still *non-receptive*. A view is receptive only when it yields different perceptual judgments when experiences are subjectively distinct.  $S'$  and  $S''$  are non-receptive since there are still a large class of subjectively distinct experiences which do not yield substantially different judgments. Gupta can block any non-receptive views as inadmissible, therefore convergence is not jeopardised by  $S'$  and  $S''$ , unless Neta has some independent problem with the receptivity admissibility criterion. Further, these sorts of view are more than merely “silly” (as Neta grants) they are actually incoherent, and Gupta holds that internal coherence is also an admissibility criterion. That  $S'$  and  $S''$  are incoherent becomes apparent when we note that they both fail to provide an epistemic means of individuating temporal experiences of the right shade of orange and other experiences. Such a view can provide no reason to think that, in some instances, *this* shade of orange has such and such epistemic consequences, while slightly different shades of orange (or even different colours) do not, and why 20 second bursts of orange are epistemically so different from 19.9 second bursts.

It is clear that Gupta will not accept any view, therefore, which does not respect *Manifestation*. Neta’s examples of  $S'$  and  $S''$  fail in this regard, for they do not respect the phenomenological character of the given; views such as these are equivalent to assigning some propositional content to a sensation on purely arbitrary grounds. They are held together by fiat, not by any sensitivity to what is given in experience. Both  $S'$  and  $S''$  offer no distinction as to why sensations of colour are sometimes epistemically weighty, and other times not.

Gupta argues that views such as  $S'$  and  $S''$  can be rejected as initial views because they are non-receptive, and perhaps incoherent. I think there is a stronger argument available to the reformed empiricist, since taking  $S'$  and  $S''$  seriously as views requires the rejection of *Manifestation*. If Neta’s criticism is to go through, he must provide a separate argument against the *Manifestation* constraint, but no such argument is on offer. There is worse news for Neta. After outlining the troubles

that  $S'$  and  $S''$  are meant to make for Reformed Empiricism, he offers a proposal to save the view: adopt a kind of dogmatism in which at least some propositions can be established based on experience alone. This “fix” for Reformed Empiricism comes at a very high cost: a reintroduction of the propositional given. Gupta wisely turns down this fix (Gupta 2009b, p. 505–506). But what Gupta has not addressed is that Neta has made a critical mistake in his proposal of the fix. For it to be possible that experience could grant, on its own, rational entitlement to a belief (or some set of beliefs), it must be because there is something manifest in that experience. But if the fix requires *Manifestation*, then Neta would be in a difficult dialectical position of setting up the very problem (for which the fix is necessary) as a problem about *Manifestation*, and then presupposing *Manifestation* in the solution.

*Manifestation* tells us that the given in experience depends on the subjective character of experience, and this is precisely what we are supposed to deny when imperceptible differences in phenomenology account for radically different beliefs. In fact, receptivity is a viable admissibility criterion for initial views because of *Manifestation*. Once you adopt *Manifestation* as a constraint, which Neta inadvertently does with his dogmatist fix, then there is no way of arguing against the viability of receptivity, and no way of forcing  $S'$  and  $S''$  as admissible initial views. If one rejects *Manifestation* all together, then one rejects a great many accounts of empirical rationality, including ones that Neta favours.

## 2.2. Strong Convergence Criticisms

There are also criticisms of convergence that make a much stronger claim. “Strong convergence criticisms” argue against Gupta’s notion of convergence on purely logical grounds. They argue that convergence does not bring with it rational entitlement or obligation, even if it is possible to block as initial starting points those sceptical and solipsistic views that might upset convergence. This is because there is a much more severe sceptical worry Gupta has not addressed: scepticism about the epistemic entitlement one has to perceptual judgments  $\Gamma_e(v)$  even if we can establish the truth of  $v$  and can establish the rational connection between  $v$ ,  $e$ , and  $\Gamma_e(v)$ . This is because the rational entitlement one has to perceptual judgments is licensed only when the Insight is established; but, says Valor Abad, there is no empirically rational support for the

Insight that is non-circular. All proofs of the Insight presuppose the Insight.

Valor Abad argues that Gupta's account fails to provide a justification for the claim that the given has normative weight — that  $\Gamma_e$  imposes rational constraints on us no matter what we may say about some particular view. He argues that any attempt to show that experience imposes upon us a rational constraint will presuppose the very fact. His comparison is with the circularity of justification for the rational force of *modus ponens*:

The modus ponens (MP) schema — like any other valid argument schema — seems to impose rational constraints on us. If S holds A and  $A \rightarrow B$ , S must accept B. According to Gupta, something similar occurs with  $\Gamma_e$ , the given in  $e$ : If S holds a view  $v$  while having an experience  $e$ , S must accept the propositions in  $\Gamma_e(v)$ . But, do MP and  $\Gamma_e$  really impose rational constraints on us? Why is it reasonable or normatively compelling to follow MP and  $\Gamma_e$ ? We could say that all instances of MP are valid and that all conditionals of the form 'If S holds  $v$  while suffering  $e$ , then S must accept  $\Gamma_e(v)$ ' are true, but the worry still remains: how can we establish this? In the first case, we would need to argue for MP without using or assuming MP, otherwise we would fall into a vicious circle. Unfortunately, it seems impossible to argue in favour of MP without assuming it at some point. (Abad 2009, p. 326)

We have two options: if we assume a transcendental argument that shows the normativity of the given, then we have transgressed the Insight. If we turn to experience, then we merely assume the Insight. The Insight is either false, or viciously circular; "it seems impossible to avoid this dilemma in justifying the normativity of  $\Gamma_e$ ." (Ibid.)

However, Valor Abad has missed the dialectic in which Gupta is involving himself. The sceptical standard here is rather high; if we allow that it is reasonable for the sceptic to call into question patterns of logical inference because they are merely axiomatic, and cannot be supported by non-circular justifications, then we have simply given the sceptic too much. The Humean sceptic who asks how we think we know  $p$  when the logical connections between what we actually know and  $p$

are tenuous, poses a concern that needs to be addressed; the sceptic who tells us that the Insight is unjustified need not be addressed for two reasons. Firstly, Gupta proposes the Insight as a *truism*, which, if we develop our account of perceptual knowledge correctly, can be *preserved*; he nowhere speaks of the Insight as something in need of proof, but rather something that is central to, or constitutive of, empiricism. Secondly, the Insight need not be given in experience to be known true. The old dichotomy that every proposition we hold true is either verified by some experience or is itself a logical truth is a central part of the classical empiricist doctrine that Gupta seeks to replace. The Insight is rational because of its central role in empiricism — because a consistent form of empiricism can be established which preserves it. Valor Abad has the significance of the analogy with *modus ponens* wrong. He should argue that just as *modus ponens* is rational *in spite* of the circularity of explicit justifications of it, the Insight is rational *in spite* of the circularity of explicit justifications of it. What this shows is that the Insight, like *modus ponens*, is not something for which it is rational to demand the sort of proof that would quiet the severe sceptic.

We have much to learn from this response to strong convergence criticisms — (which is more or less a paraphrase of Gupta's own defense of his work). That the Insight is rational in spite of explicit justifications for it should make clear one of the key distinctions between Gupta's Reformed Empiricism and its classical predecessors, at least its classical British predecessors. While previous empiricists held that all of our knowledge should be based on, grounded in, or verified by experience, Reformed Empiricism is committed to no such absolute claim. Gupta holds rather that an agent's belief set (or, more generally, her view) can be rendered rational by some sequence of experiences. This means that Reformed Empiricism need not avail itself of anything like a classical principle of verification, and all of the technical and conceptual problems associated with our knowledge of said principle. Valor Abad seems to be confusing the Insight with such a basic principle (indeed, his characterisation of it as "basic" and as a "principle" betrays his confusion), but this is to confuse the entirety of the project with the sorts of problematic empiricisms for which Reformed Empiricism is an alternative. Gupta's empiricism neither takes the bald sceptic seriously, nor does he construct an account of experience as offering a verifica-

tion of every belief, as if we may turn to some particular experience (or set of experiences) as the justification for, and meaning of, each belief/judgment in our view. The mistake is to think that just because we cannot do this for some particular belief (even one so central as the Insight), that the belief is not rendered rational (as part of a belief set or view) by experience as our principal epistemic authority and guide. It is to not think of experience as functioning holistically, and therefore to fail to think of justification via experience as something that is dynamical and diachronic. The Insight is not a “basic principle” at all, and it is certainly (as Gupta would admit) not the sort of thing that can be “grounded” in the classical sense — but no belief/claim can be grounded in the classical sense according to Gupta, so this should come as no surprise.

### 3. TROUBLES WITH THE ARCHITECTONIC

#### 3.1. *Troubles with Equivalence: McDowell’s Disjunctivism*

A second set of criticisms focuses on the constraints for normative empiricism which Gupta takes as guiding the development of his Reformed Empiricism. McDowell, for example, has argued that Gupta offers us no reason to adopt the *Equivalence* constraint, since it is entirely possible that subjectively identical experiences can have differing content. In fact, this is a central tenet of McDowell’s epistemological disjunctivism. For McDowell, we begin by accepting that experience can rationally and normatively support perceptual beliefs. In order to maintain this position, we must divorce our account of experience from mere sensibility as it has been traditionally construed — that is, experience as non-conceptual. Experience is, according to McDowell, our principal epistemic authority and guide, but only when construed as involving conceptual capacities that one normally associates with the *understanding*, not *receptivity* (to use the Kantian terminology that McDowell prefers). Conceptual capacities belonging to a faculty of reason (McDowell 2008, p. 2) operate inextricably and in an unmediated way in experience itself.<sup>5</sup> As McDowell once put it, “we can coherently credit experiences with rational relations to judgment and belief... only if we take it that spontaneity is already implicated in receptivity; that is, only if we take it that experiences have conceptual content.” (McDowell 1996, p. 162)

These concepts are the very concepts that operate in judgments also.

Such a view can only remain tenable if one argues that there are two kinds of experiences: ones which represent the world thus and so, and ones which only *seem* to represent the world thus and so. The difference is between veridical perception and real content, and a mere *seeming* content in the cases of non-veridical perception. This disjunctivism only becomes tenable if one rejects *Equivalence*, since subjectively identical experiences may not have the same rational contents, though, according to McDowell, they can both make a subject’s belief (that the world is thus and so) rational. For McDowell, the mental states which accompany veridical and non-veridical perceptions differ because of their connections to the world — this in spite of the experiences themselves being indistinguishable.

Gupta asks the following question: “...how do we account for the fact that in both cases, veridical and illusory, the subject is equally rational in her belief [that *p*]?” (Gupta 2009b, p. 491) McDowell grants that both veridical and illusory experiences are rational (McDowell 2009, p. 470), but given that he has granted this, Gupta asks “how do we move... from seeming givenness to actual rationality?” (Gupta 2009b, p. 491) In other words, what is it about seeming cases that provides the epistemic agent with different contents than she is provided with in veridical cases? Either McDowell has an account, in which case he will need to avail himself of *Equivalence*, or he denies that there is anything similar given in experience in veridical and illusory cases, in which case he fails to account for how they both contribute equally to the rationality of the same belief(s). Recall that Gupta characterises *Equivalence* in just this way: if *e* and *e’* are subjectively identical, then the given in *e* is identical to the given in *e’*. McDowell may want to define the given in more robust terms, but it remains to be seen why he wants to do so, especially given that he already yields the point that what really matters to the rationality of belief is how it *seems* to the epistemic agent.

Further, even though McDowell’s brand of disjunctivism may preserve the Insight, Multiple-Factorizability is jeopardised by his account, giving us independent grounds on which to find his disjunctivism unattractive—at least for those of us who take it to be a truism. Like Sellars, McDowell believes that the concepts in our language are what allow us to have the sorts of perceptual judgments we do, i.e. these con-

cepts allow us to take the content we do from experience of the world being thus and so, which is some kind of conceptual (if not propositional) content. Thus, we have privileged a set of inherited concepts, but it seems we have done so *for no good reason*. We have given experience its rational weight, but either (a) we argue, with Kant, that we must remain with this set of concepts come what may or (b) we argue, with Sellars, that changes in our conceptual scheme occur, but how these changes are attached to experience is not clear. If we pursue (a), we do not preserve Multiple-Factorizability. If we pursue (b), we do great damage to the Insight, damage that McDowell thought could be avoided by his disjunctivism, for experience can no longer guide us in the development of the concepts of the understanding.

It becomes apparent rather quickly that McDowell not only has problems with Multiple-Factorizability and the *Equivalence* constraint; he also has a problem with *Reliability*. Take his example of non-inferentially seeing a cardinal. (McDowell 2008, §4) While he admits that not all people have the conceptual capacity to make perceptual judgments of the sort, “That’s a cardinal,” many do, and the *CARDINAL* concept is operating at the level of experience itself (when one makes such a judgment). Here we see the spontaneity in receptivity mentioned earlier. The veridical experience that the world is thus and so (specifically, that there is a cardinal *there*), means that there is a conceptual content provided that differs from the conceptual content that would be given (or perhaps fail to be given) in hallucinatory cases. But now, experience can yield (for the hallucinator) a content that is false (if propositional or proposition-like) or erroneous (if merely a conceptual content). *Reliability* captures the fact that what we would like to say is that experience isn’t to blame in such cases (for example, if I am seeing a Blue Jay in poor lighting conditions); what is to blame is my view of the world. However, according to McDowell, the concepts of the understanding (for beings like us) inextricably operate in experience; experience takes on all of the many faults that can be found in our view of the world and our position in it, and the given therein can, as a result, yield false propositions or erroneous contents.

The fundamental nature of the disagreement is apparent once we realise there are no grounds to accept any of the other constraints if one adopts McDowell’s disjunctivism: *Existence* is rejected since in illusory

cases, it is possible that nothing is given in experience; *Equivalence* and *Reliability* are rejected for the reasons given above; finally, *Manifestation* is rejected, since the given does not systematically depend on the subjective character of experience, but on whether or not those experiences are veridical or hallucinatory. McDowell and Gupta are merely speaking past one another as the two have very different notions of the given.

That being said, it is still a disagreement that can be adjudicated. This is because an account of empirical rationality is *prima facie* more attractive if it can handle the truisms and the constraints. The rejection of Multiple-Factorizability or *Equivalence* (or what have you) is a move one makes in epistemology precisely because classical epistemologies failed to satisfy all of these desiderata. A guiding principle in Gupta (2006a) is to treat the truisms and the constraints with respect. There is a wisdom in taking them as constraints for our theorising, for they embody many of our pre-analytic commitments. One can reject one of them, or some constellation of them, when developing an epistemological position, but our target should be, if possible, to preserve them all. Reformed Empiricism is able to do that; McDowell’s disjunctivism is not. Gupta wants to show that he can develop a defensible empiricism that preserves the plausibility of these constraints without falling into the propositional given and Cartesian conceptions of experience. McDowell has missed the dialectic of the work if he thinks anything else is at stake.

### 3.2. *Reliability and Ratifiability: Peacocke and “Face-Value” Experience*

Another architectonic critique comes from Peacocke (2009). Peacocke argues that Gupta has not adequately characterised his *Reliability* constraint.<sup>6</sup> According to Gupta, experience never yields anything false or erroneous. Where there is something wrong about our perceptual judgments, it is not experience that is to blame, but some defect in our view. Peacocke says that

... this position is false to the phenomenology, to the epistemic status, and to the metaphysics of experience. The content of apparently misleading experiences cannot be attributed to perceptual judgements or beliefs, because in

some cases the subject knows he is experiencing an illusion; yet the experience still has the false content. (Peacocke 2009, p. 477)

Peacocke's example of the Müller-Lyer illusion makes the point more salient. In this case, we know that the lines are of the same length, yet this does not prevent experience from offering representational content to the contrary. Here, it would seem, our view is perfectly well established and it is experience that continues to impart false or erroneous contents.

But Peacocke is wrong. Müller-Lyer is actually a paradigm case of revision in Reformed Empiricism. We start with the assumption (view) that we are able to make determinations about the equality or inequality in length of two relatively short line-segments that are near to each other and parallel. We see the lines, and come to judge that they are not of equal length. Then, someone measures the lines for us. In so far as we trust our measuring instruments, the lines are shown to be the same length. We have revised our view in light of experience. We now have the assumption that we are the kinds of beings for whom a perceptual bias persists. When shown the illusion again, the subjectively identical experience gives us rational entitlements to the judgment that the lines are of equal length. That they *seem* to have stayed the same length means nothing, so long as we have revised our views in the right ways (based on experience) so that we have rational entitlement to the belief that the lines are the same length.

Peacocke will not yet be satisfied, for he also argues that if Reformed Empiricism is adopted, then there is no sense in which experiential contents can ever be taken at "face-value", to use Peacocke's term. Undergoing an experience would be divorced from having the world presented to you as being a certain way. All judgments to the effect that the world is a certain way would either be "an irrational leap in the dark, or something inferential." (Peacocke 2009, p. 478) Gupta will have lost the rational connection between experience and judgment. However, Peacocke is again mistaken. He construes the hypothetical given as requiring some inference to impart its contents. This is not the case. There is, for Gupta, spontaneity of experience. Given a view  $v$ , experience operates as a function, which takes us (immediately, intuitively, naturally, and spontaneously) to a judgment. It is not as if we ever

encounter the neutrality of the given in experience itself (e.g. Husserlian *epoché*). We experience the world as thus and so immediately in experience, but this does not mean that the given in experience does the conceptual heavy lifting. Thus, the hypothetical given does not put in danger the phenomenology of experience, nor its epistemic status. A hypothetical given is perfectly consistent with our phenomenology, especially when we take into account Gupta's explicit inclusion of the *Manifestation* constraint. (As to being true to the metaphysical nature of experience, Gupta is wisely silent.)

But even if experience is spontaneous, Peacocke argues that Reformed Empiricism offers no account of how transitions from one view to another in light of experience can be rational. Surely there has been a change in our mentality (our belief system at the very least) in so far as two views,  $v$  and  $v^*$ , are not the same. And certainly this seems to be a result of the intervening experience  $e$ . But what makes such a change in view *rational*? Peacocke introduces the "Ratifiability Condition" which must be met if such transitions are thought to be rational:

*Ratifiability:* Whenever a mental transition is rational, there is a condition of soundness that it meets. This soundness condition involves the notion of truth, and it is a condition that concerns the correctness or fulfillment of the contents of one or more of the mental states involved in the transition. (Peacocke 2009, p. 478–479)

But this notion of truth presupposes a more robust account of content than Gupta is willing to countenance in his hypothetical account of the given. It presupposes that at least some experiences have a "face-value" content, and that such contents can be true: what Peacocke calls "content as required to elucidate rationality". Without it, we are left with no way of ensuring that the transition is rational, since no step in the transition has a content that is true. Gupta, after all, likens his hypothetical model of the given to an argument schema, which takes us from a view to a proposition (or set of propositions). But, unlike the example of *modus ponens*, which is a valid inference form, and which therefore has truth-evaluable premises (and thus is able to be ratified — it is truth preserving), the transition from one view to another based on a non-propositional given cannot be ratified. Similar arguments have been made by Berker (2011), who argues that you can only get categorical

entitlements out of revision if categorical entitlements are put into the revision process; otherwise, there is no way to secure the rationality of the move from the hypothetical to the categorical.

It seems that Peacocke's analysis has not taken full account of the logical reforms at the centre of Reformed Empiricism. Reformed Empiricism does not show how our conception of the self and world can be considered true, even in the face of the harshest sceptical criticism; any empiricism that accepts this task is playing a fool's game. Reformed Empiricism is an attempt to show how, using only empiricist principles, one might justify her current set of beliefs, asserting that the set is *rational* because she has met certain reasonable conditions for thinking so — because her view has converged with other very different views, perhaps those of her community members, as a result of experience. It answers the sceptic, but only after the sceptic has been neutralised. It shows the sceptic that experience can rationally force a change in view, and asks the sceptic to now formulate her doctrine in light of this epistemic fact.

Gupta is not concerned with offering an account of how an individual shift in view, irrespective of the possible convergence of all views in light of experiences  $E$ , might satisfy *Ratifiability*. Gupta holds that the rationality of any shift in view is established by convergence with other views, no matter how radically different they may have been at the beginning of inquiry. Of course, there are no guarantees that convergence will occur, but only relative to even merely possible or idealised convergence can we “ratify” shifts in view. The reformed empiricist can admit that there is perhaps no individual stage of a revision process that will meet *Ratifiability*, but this does not prevent revision from being rationally rational.

#### 4. REFORMED EMPIRICISM AND THE A PRIORI

The third and most interesting family of criticisms charge that Reformed Empiricism relies on rationalist assumptions. More often than not, these critics focus their attention on Gupta's admissibility criteria glossed above. The argument takes the form of those expressed by Neta and Valor Abad, though rationalist critiques follow the reasoning exhibited in those critiques to its natural end: Gupta's reforms are merely ratio-

nalism in empiricism's clothing.

Berker (2011) and Schafer (2011) both argue for this thesis, though in slightly different ways. In this section, we will explore their criticisms, and then show how such criticisms miss the mark: Gupta's empiricism deserves to go by that name. Nonetheless, such criticisms have hit upon, if only obliquely, the need to offer an explication of how *a priori* claims function in Reformed Empiricism. In particular, we need an account of how we know *Equivalence* and other related claims. This section begins with an overview of Berker's and Schafer's challenge that Reformed Empiricism is no empiricism at all; this discussion is then utilised to show that Reformed Empiricism does presuppose *a priori* principles, but that such principles are analytic of Reformed Empiricism, capturing the most general principles on which any empiricist epistemology must rest. As claims that are analytic of the very framework of the view being proposed, they should not trouble the reformed empiricist.

Let us start with Berker. Berker argues that Gupta has not done an adequate job dispelling the solipsist or the sceptic. He introduces a bit of formalism to help him develop the point. Take the set of propositions possessed by all convergent views after being revised in light of any given finite sequence of experiences  $E$ :

$$\Omega_E = \{P : (\forall \text{ admissible view } v) (P \in \rho_E(v))\},$$

where  $\rho_E(v)$  is the convergence point for all admissible views given  $E$ . The set  $\Omega_E$  contains all of those propositions upon which all of the admissible views will come to agree given  $E$ , so Berker calls it “the common core of admissible outcomes generated by  $E$ ”. (Berker 2011, p. 24) Any proposition that is a member of  $\Omega_E$  is one to which we have unconditional entitlement. Of course,  $\Omega_E$  only represents unconditional entitlements if we preclude from our set of starting points those views that put such convergence in question. This, as we have already seen, must be done on some principled ground that is acceptable to empiricism, i.e. must preclude unacceptable views as initial starting points in revision by some relatively innocent admissibility criteria. Gupta has three such criteria: receptivity, internal coherence, and non-rigidity. Utilising these criteria, Gupta can block the sorts of solipsistic and sceptical views that put in danger the viability of  $\Omega_E$  as a common core of propositions.

But Berker is not convinced. He argues that Gupta's notion of expe-

rience may not actually respect the Insight.

Gupta has certainly provided an account of categorical justification in which experience plays an important role. However, in order to vindicate empiricism we don't just need experience to play some role in the justification of our beliefs; it is difficult to see how any plausible account of justification, whether rationalist or empiricist, could deny that. Rather, what we need is for experience to play an exclusive or primary role in the justification of our beliefs. And it remains to be seen whether experience bears the brunt of the normative work in Gupta's proposal. In particular, we need to ask whether there are places in Gupta's account where reason (rather than experience on its own) makes a substantial contribution to the justification that we have for our beliefs. (Berker 2011, p. 26)

Berker argues that reason plays three substantial roles in Gupta's Reformed Empiricism, and only one of these roles is recognised by Gupta. Firstly, there is the *a priori* use of reason to discern the admissible from the non-admissible views. (This is the use of reason that Gupta does acknowledge, and I will not address it here.) Secondly, Gupta uses reason to demarcate the contours of the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  and  $\rho_E(v)$  functions. Thirdly, Gupta also uses reason to establish the truth of the *Equivalence* constraint, as well as the truth of the claim that rational entitlement to a set of perceptual judgments is established regardless of the veridicality of experience. So long as two experiences,  $e$  and  $e'$ , are subjectively identical, and so long as we can fix the view variable, then  $\Gamma_e(v) = \Gamma_{e'}(v)$  is *a priori*.

For Berker, Gupta must use reason to determine *a priori* the proper extension of the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function. In fact, Berker calls such statements about the extension of  $\Gamma_e(v)$  *synthetic a priori*. The charge is strong indeed, for Gupta needs to prevent his hypothetical account of the given, and the interdependence of experience and view, from suffering the pitfalls of Kant's similar project. This is only possible if Reformed Empiricism can generate, using only experience and view, the sorts of judgments about the self and the world that were thought to require a transcendental source in Kant's system. If Berker's criticism is apt, then Gupta too has proposed an account of the rationality of experience that

presupposes too significant a role for reason. Assume, with Gupta, that the first use of reason (to determine which views are admissible and which are not via convergence) is legitimate. Even so, convergence will not help us determine the proper extension of  $\Gamma_e(v)$ . Because convergence requires specific values for the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function, this criticism comes prior to convergence. But, having precluded convergence as a useful tool to establish the contours of the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function, it seems that there is no way for Gupta to prevent someone from embedding into the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function any theory of the given they so choose, even a propositional account of the given. This is because we can use the two-variable function  $\Gamma_e(v)$  (which takes experiences and views and maps them onto perceptual judgments) to construct a simpler function from experiences to classes of propositions without mention of view (as does the sense-datum theory of perceptual judgments). Berker argues that Gupta can only rule out such a possibility through some illicit use of reason. (We will say more about embedding a disjunctivist view into  $\Gamma_e(v)$  and, *a fortiori*  $\Gamma_e(v) = \Gamma_{e'}(v)$ , in a few pages.)

Reason is also operating to determine the extension of the  $\rho_E(v)$  function. Berker asks us to suppose a rather simple case of revision: a rational agent with view  $v$  undergoes experience  $e$ , and  $q \in \Gamma_e(v)$ . (Berker is here assuming for the purposes of argument that  $\Gamma_e(v)$  has been unproblematically fixed, contrary to his previous criticism.) Perhaps  $q$  merely needs to be added to  $v$  to generate some new view  $v^*$ , but, the more interesting cases are when  $v^*$  is a substantial revision of  $v$ . How are we to determine when a substantial revision is to occur, and how that substantial revision should occur? In other words, how can we preclude the possibility that one can begin her epistemic life with a completely common sense view, and, in light of some experience, simply revise her position to a solipsistic or sceptical one? Either Gupta offers no principled reason why such revisions ought to be precluded, in which case even the initial blocking of rigid views does not save the day against solipsism or scepticism, or Gupta does offer principled reasons, but of an illicit and rationalist sort (since no appeal to convergence can prevent such a possibility, given that such possibilities do irreparable harm to the epistemic force of convergence).

Before examining Berker's analysis of the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function (which we shall do after examining similarities between his critique and Shafer's

critique), let us pose a problem for his analysis of  $\rho_E(v)$ . It is unclear why Gupta must be in a position to block the possibility of a given view being revised in light of a given experience into a radically different, even sceptical view, because it is unclear why this poses a problem for said sceptical view, so arrived at, from partaking in the categorical judgments contained in  $\Omega_E$ . This is because it seems impossible for a severe form of scepticism to be formulated in light of experience, and this is independent of any admissibility constraint whatsoever. The sceptical view in question, no matter what sort of lunacy it may profess, has built into itself a rational role for experience based on the revision process (here a rather short one, containing only one experience and two views, one input and one output). Imagine agent *A* possessing initial view  $v_0$ . Pretend that this view is similar in nature to our normal common sense picture of the world. Now imagine *A* undergoes experience  $e_1$ , which (*ex hypothesi*) leads her to revise  $v_0$  into a harsh Pyrrhonian “view” of the world, in as much as a Pyrrhonian sceptic can have a *view* of the world. Call it  $v_p$ . This view includes the minimal sceptical commitment to *Diaphônia* (the mode from disagreement), including the accompanying belief that one should suspend all belief. Allow this in itself to be a consistent position for the sake of argument. However, the rationality of view  $v_p$  rests on the revision process from  $v_0$  in light of the rational contribution of  $e_1$ . Thus the holder of  $v_p$  either admits (a) that experience can rationally motivate a change in view (calling into question the coherence of the view, in which case it should be rejected by *A*, whom we assume rational), or (b) *A* modifies her scepticism so that it is a milder form, call it “scepticism”, allowing for rational revision in light of experience. But now what exactly is so scary about such a view, and why is it necessarily the case that  $v_p$  does not partake in  $\Omega$  at  $\rho_E(v)$ ? The only condition operating on revision in this case, which Gupta does not make explicit, is this: no revision from a coherent view to an incoherent view can be licensed by experience. (This is more or less a corollary to the *Reliability* constraint, since we must blame our view of the world, not experience, if we find ourselves involved in incoherence.)

Of course, experience can *cause* us to adopt an incoherent view or contradict our current view, but experience can never license a shift to  $v_p$  without  $v_p$  assuming some rational role for experience, contrary to scepticism (i.e.  $v_p$  itself). Either  $v_p$  marks an arbitrary and *a priori*

shift, in which case experience is not to blame (for it has licensed nothing), or  $v_p$  is non-pathological: critically,  $v_p$  does not suspend judgment regarding one important belief — that the given prompts changes in view.

Before we look at a reply to Berker’s criticism that Gupta has no non-rationalist way of delineating the contours of the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function, we should pause to look at the ways in which the charge of rationalism is developed by another critic. Schafer (2011) also argues that Reformed Empiricism appeals to reason in ways that betray the Insight. He argues that the admissibility constraints placed on initial views “seem to give us a basis for at least some deeply contingent *a priori* knowledge” (§3), specifically the substantive *a priori* knowledge that none of these inadmissible views obtains. For such reasons, we should think of Gupta’s project as more indebted to the Kantian tradition than the empiricist tradition:

Perhaps the real lesson for someone like Gupta to draw from these concerns is that empiricism is only sustainable when combined with a substantial degree of rationalism. For perhaps we can only do justice to the empiricist’s ideal of experience as the highest epistemic authority by accepting a set of *a priori* constraints that amount to a tacit endorsement of a fairly robust form of rationalism. If so, it might be best to regard Gupta’s response to scepticism as most similar, not to traditional forms of empiricism, but instead to the sort of combination of empiricism and rationalism that we encounter in work in the Kantian tradition. (Schafer 2011, p. 15)

According to Schafer, this is for two reasons. Like Kant, Gupta thinks the only successful response to the sceptic accepts constraints that are both empirical and rational in nature. Secondly, if Gupta is a rationalist (which Schafer thinks he must be), it is clear he is of a Kantian sort. As Schafer notes, theoretical reason in and of itself can grant us no positive view of the world, no *a priori* insight into the structure of reality: a commitment Gupta shares with Kant.

According to Berker and Schafer, we may grant that Gupta offers an adequate response to the sceptic, and that his system gives experience an important and ineliminable epistemic role. However, the system

only works because it avails itself of certain illicit rationalist assumptions. Gupta's view is novel and impressive, though not empiricist.

However, there are reasons to doubt such a criticism. Let us begin with Schafer's main point, that Gupta commits himself to a Kantian sort of view by holding that reason can adjudicate between admissible and inadmissible views prior to experience. As we saw, Schafer thinks this amounts to *deeply contingent* knowledge regarding which views do or do not obtain. However, this is not the case. Gupta offers no grounds on which an internally coherent view can be rejected as an inaccurate view of the world. He is at pains to show that it remains possible (within Reformed Empiricism) to arrive at solipsistic or sceptical views of the world as the result of experience; the prohibitions on solipsism, scepticism, or any other rigid view only have jurisdiction at the initial stage of a revision process:

... the rigidity constraint rules out solipsism as a starting point of revision. But this leaves it completely open whether the revision of a view — even an admissible view — can result in solipsism. So admissibility constraints do not yield a priori knowledge that solipsism is false. They do not even yield a priori directives on belief, e.g., that one ought to believe that solipsism is false. (Gupta 2011, p. 49)

Also, as Gupta argues, the affinities between his view and Kant's should not be over-stated. Critically, Kant's "empiricism" (if we may call it that) argues that experience is a product of the understanding and sensibility. For Gupta, experience is pure receptivity. (Gupta 2011, p. 50) While Gupta, Kant, and Neo-Kantians like McDowell all agree that mere receptivity is not enough to grant one epistemic license to a set of claims, they disagree about whether this fact precludes experience from being mere receptivity.

We draw attention to Gupta's response to Schafer's criticism in order to make clear that Gupta leaves much room for the *a priori*, though, like previous forms of post-Kantian empiricism, it is not a synthetic *a priori*, nor does it offer any contingent knowledge (*pace* Schafer). Exactly how we ought to think of the *a priori* in Gupta's system will become clearer once we have an idea of more specific troubles in that system that seem to require extensive use of reason in their amelioration. To those specific criticisms from Berker we now turn.

Gupta's response to Berker is less straightforward than his response to Schafer. Gupta argues that his  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function is fully determined by its arguments (experience and view). As he makes clear, views are more than just collections of judgments or beliefs; a view contains not only a set of judgments, but "also links between experiences and perceptual judgments: the view determines how the subject is to respond to an experience." (Gupta 2011, p. 49) Berker's criticism that one can represent (or even reconstruct) the dreaded sense-datum model of experience by fixing the extension of  $\Gamma_e(v)$  so that it maps experiences to perceptual judgments regardless of view — is not troubling, since we can *also* fix the extension of  $\Gamma_e(v)$  as a two-variable function which takes us from sense-datum theorists' peculiar view of the self (inherited from Descartes) to a class of perceptual judgments based on experience.

While Gupta is not so explicit in his own defense, it is clear that he does not want to preclude the formulation of the sense-datum view. That would be unwarranted. He wants to show that there is no reason why one should view the extension of  $\Gamma_e(v)$  as a sense-datum theorist would, and no reason why sense-datum theory should not be viewed as merely one particular way of characterising the mapping from views and experience to some set of perceptual judgments. There is nothing antecedently wrong with the sense-datum view, so we shouldn't want to block its construction based on the formal strictures of Reformed Empiricism; we merely want to say, with reference to the  $\Gamma_e(v)$  function, that there are a number of possible ways of filling in the view variable — and that experience need not be thought of as licensing only a set of very restricted statements about sense-data. That Gupta's function can allow for the non-privileged and non-unique construction of the sense-datum view is a boon, not a flaw.

The charge of rationalism is not yet dispensed with, however. Berker argues that there are still two more illicit uses of reason in Reformed Empiricism. The first has to do with our knowledge of *Equivalence*; perhaps the other constraints also require an illicit use of reason for their characterisation, but what I say here in defense of *Equivalence* generalises to any such extension of the argument Berker might wish to pursue. Berker's worry is this: *Equivalence* seems like it is a substantive claim. How do we know that subjectively identical experiences will make the same rational contributions? How do we know that the con-

straint holds? Relatedly, how can we ensure that someone with a very different model of the given, e.g. a disjunctivist like McDowell, cannot embed in his or her very own model as the relevant view? If this is possible, then  $\Gamma_e(v) = \Gamma_{e'}(v)$  ceases to be true for all  $e/e'$  pairs. To see this, denote a standard disjunctivism by  $v^*$ ; now, it is not the case that  $\Gamma_e(v^*) = \Gamma_{e'}(v^*)$ , since disjunctivism is explicitly founded on the idea that  $\Gamma_e(v) \neq \Gamma_{e'}(v)$  is possible.

Let us deal with *Equivalence* first. Establishing *Equivalence* (or any other constraint) by reason alone would certainly be illicit if *Equivalence* were synthetic — i.e. if it provided a genuine extension of our knowledge, or told us some way that the world would have to be. Rather, *Equivalence* and the other constraints are analytic of Reformed Empiricism. They constitute the framework within which a workable empiricism can be formulated. We have entitlement to them as constitutive principles of Reformed Empiricism, and they do not need to survive revision on course to  $\Omega_E$  in order to gain our assent, as is the case with empirical claims. Likewise,  $\Gamma_e(v) = \Gamma_{e'}(v)$  is analytic of Reformed Empiricism. It is not meant to be part of any view that rejects the constraints imposed by Gupta. *Equivalence* is presupposed by the empiricist, based on her commitment that, all things being equal regarding view, whether one undergoes a veridical or hallucinatory experience has no bearing on the rational entitlement one has to some set of perceptual judgments. This is quite different from the claim that such principles are synthetic *a priori*; rather, such principles are constitutive of empiricism. To deny the empiricist the right to assume them as analytic of her framework is to not even allow her to formulate her position. *Equivalence* is analytic of a normative empiricism because to assume otherwise is, from the empiricist's perspective, to supply experience with some magical property that provides rational entitlements based on something other than phenomenal character.

In as much as Gupta maintains a central role for reason in his empiricism, and in as much as he thinks experience unable to account for the rationality of our beliefs on its own, it is clear that he has moved far away from the classical empiricist tradition (including the simple sense-datum theories that are its most recent incarnation). However, the dichotomous choice, “classical empiricism or Kant”, is far too coarse, as is the related dichotomy between an impoverished view of reason (as

the mere manipulation of concepts) on the one hand, or reason as an overgenerous source of synthetic *a priori* truths on the other. Reason can play a central (though subordinate) role in determining the admissibility of initial views, or in testing the coherence of revised views, or in determining those constraints on which empiricism itself rests. It is a rather old view of the *a priori* that holds reason can only make contributions to our knowledge by explicating the meaning of a concept, or by showing how certain concepts might be said to “contain” others, as *bachelor* contains the concepts *unmarried* and *adult man*. Gupta is right to move beyond this limited view of the role of reason within empiricism.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The power of Reformed Empiricism to deflect the claims of its critics should be clear. The hypothetical model of the given that Gupta employs, together with the technical apparatus of revision, are sufficient to account for our convergence on a common sense core of beliefs, utilising experience as our “principal epistemic authority and guide”, and employing reason in an important role — but not one that makes *a prioristic* proclamations regarding the way the world is or must be. Questions remain, of course. While we see convergence in views on a common core, we also see divergence in views regarding a host of other matters. Whether or not experience is enough to force convergence on these beliefs is a difficult sociological or psychological question. As to whether we should be optimistic of the transformative role of experience in all facets of life, I do not pass a judgment one way or the other.

Regarding matters of a more idealised and epistemological sort, Reformed Empiricism remains a uniquely promising theory, one that captures what has always seemed true of empiricist projects from the past, but that avoids the conceptual confusions and logical excesses of these predecessors — be they classical British empiricism, Russellian empiricism, logical empiricism, or some form of generalised sense-datum empiricism.

The critics of Reformed Empiricism have thought the doctrine unable to stay true to its professed empiricist commitments without adopting something of the Kantian picture that concepts (and our whole con-

ceptual faculty of understanding) operate in experience itself, or without adopting this or that synthetic *a priori* principle. McDowell represents the first line of thought, with roots as deep in Sellars' philosophy as in Kant's. These neo-Kantian/neo-Sellarsian criticisms, as well as the critiques of Berker and Schafer, only seem to strike a blow to Reformed Empiricism because they overlook the subtle and inventive way that Gupta offers a re-characterisation not only of experience, but of reason as well. Reason is an aid in our convergence on a refined view of the world, surely; but it is subordinated to experience in discerning what views are capable of entering revision processes. It tells us nothing substantive about the world.

Setting aside these fine-grained worries, I would like to close with a more general observation regarding Reformed Empiricism. Perhaps its greatest strength lies in its most underappreciated features. Reformed Empiricism is attractive for its ability to preserve many of our commitments about the nature of experience, including the conceptual neutrality and reliability of experience. But equally as powerful is a methodological prescription that is merely implicit in Gupta's presentation of the doctrine. This methodological prescription regards the *logical spirit* of earlier forms of twentieth century empiricism. Yes, Reformed Empiricism captures our pre-theoretical intuitions regarding the malleability of our views in the face of experience, and even the malleability of the understanding of the self and the way that it is situated in the world. But it also prescribes for us a way for doing philosophy as empiricist epistemologists, through the keen application of the most recent logical tools to the study of long-standing problems in the theory of knowledge.

Earlier twentieth century forms of empiricism, especially logical empiricism, were wedded to Russell and Whitehead's logic of relations from the *Principia*, but also arguably to the propositional model of the given addressed in the first section of this paper. Logical empiricists were unable to establish the kind of formal and scientific philosophy they envisioned with these tools, but this failure should not be conflated with the worthwhile (and more general commitment) to utilise the most sophisticated logical tools when dealing with recalcitrant problems in philosophy. Our understanding of the rational contribution of experience to knowledge is just such a problem, and it has beguiled philosophers since at least the Modern era, especially those with em-

piricist leanings. Reformed Empiricism marks the first advance in nearly a century regarding the empiricist analysis of perceptual judgments and the important contributions of a conceptually neutral account of experience for such a project. For this reason, if for no other, its successes tell us that the doctrine deserves our close attention, and further exploration.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The logic of interdependence had already been employed by Gupta and Belnap with fruitful results for their treatment of the concept of truth and its behaviour vis-à-vis the liar's paradox. See Gupta (1993) and Gupta (1988-89) for full accounts of the revision theory of truth. See Chapter 3, "Interdependent Definitions: An Introduction" in Gupta (2006a) for a precise overview on the mechanics of interdependence.

<sup>2</sup>Gupta writes: "Classical empiricism is founded on the Cartesian view that we begin, or ought to begin, our inquiry with a true and adequate conception of the self: the self has direct awareness of its sensations, sense-data, ideas, and so on." (Gupta 2006a, p. 75)

<sup>3</sup>Two revision sequences,  $V$  and  $V'$ , converge iff there is a stage  $n$  such that, for all stages  $m \geq n$ ,  $V_m$  is virtually identical to  $V'_m$ . The relation of virtual identity holds between two views,  $V$  and  $V'$ , just in case the same experience causes a rational agent with  $V$  and a rational agent with  $V'$  to have the same belief. (Gupta 2006a, p. 93)

<sup>4</sup>A sequence of views  $V$  is stable iff there is a stage  $n$  such that, for all stages  $m \geq n$ ,  $V_m$  is fundamentally equivalent to  $V_n$ . Views are fundamentally equivalent just in case they are "the same in all relevant respects." (Gupta 2006a, p. 91)

<sup>5</sup>McDowell once held the view that experience, already conceptualised, provided one with all of the *propositional* content required to account (non-inferentially) for a subject's experiential knowledge. McDowell now rejects this view. See his (2008).

<sup>6</sup>Schafer (2011) also offers a critique of the *Reliability* constraint, though we will not address it here.

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