

'Perceptual Justification and the Cartesian Theater'

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Guiding Question: Why is it that what I am justified in believing depends on my perceptual experiences, but not on yours?

1. Cartesianism, anti-Cartesianism, and Perceptual Partiality

Cartesian epistemology of perception: Perceptual beliefs are justified by inference from known premises about one's perceptual experiences.

(TWO SPECTATORS) You and Other are in different rooms, each equipped with a TV. The TVs are hooked up to cameras, which are pointed at a single wall of an unknown color. Both TVs are off, but pretty soon, exactly one will be turned on. Your evidence concerning the reliability of your own and Other's TV are on a par. You know all of this.

Datum: Only your own TV's images affect your justification to believe the wall is red.

Uncontroversial explanation: You know about your TV's images, but not Other's. (So, if you knew Other's TV's images, you'd be justified to the same degree by them.)

(TWO PERCEIVERS) You and Other are facing a wall of an unknown color. You are both wearing blindfolds, but pretty soon, exactly one of the blindfolds will be removed. Your evidence concerning the reliability of your own and Other's visual faculties are on a par. You know all of this.

Datum: Only your own visual experiences affect your justification to believe the wall is red.

Cartesian explanation: You know about your visual experiences, but not Other's. (So, if you knew Other's experiences, you'd be justified to the same degree by them.)

Anti-Cartesian model of perception: Perceptual beliefs are justified by perceptual states themselves. (e.g., dogmatism, phenomenal conservatism, disjunctivism)

Anti-Cartesian explanation of the datum (schematic): You are in your own perceptual states, but not Other's. (So, even if you knew Other's experiences, ...)

(PERCEPTUAL PARTIALITY) Having a perceptual experience can sometimes give you substantially stronger justification for a perceptual belief than you would get from knowing that another person has had such an experience.

2. We can't be Cartesians "all the way down".

Even Cartesians allow *higher-order knowledge* to justify perceptual beliefs. Cartesian: "This is a special case." Reply: Compare experience with belief itself:

(OBVIOUS CONSEQUENCE) You know that a picnic will be cancelled if it rains, and you believe that it will rain based on strong meteorological evidence. Yet you also have strong but misleading higher-order evidence that you are unreliable at evaluating meteorological evidence.

Controversial question: Is your belief that it will rain justified?

If Yes, then you have *justification* to believe the picnic will be cancelled.

If No, then you still are *rationally required* to believe that the picnic will be cancelled.

Yet if instead you knew Other believed it will rain, this knowledge would neither justify nor require belief that the picnic will be cancelled. So either way,

(WEAK DOXASTIC PARTIALITY) Holding a belief can sometimes have substantially stronger effects on your justification for other beliefs than would result from knowing that another person holds that belief.

3. A problem for anti-Cartesianism

(ANTICIPATED EXPERIENCE) Shortly before noon, you are wearing a blindfold and facing a wall. You know that at noon, the blindfold will be removed, and that when it is, you will seem to see a red wall.

PERCEPTUAL PARTIALITY seems to imply that at noon, you have *stronger* justification to believe that the wall is red than you had before noon. But it seems irrational for you to become *more confident* that the wall is red when you have an experience that you knew in advance you would have.

(Option 1) *Biting the Bullet: You do get stronger justification at noon to believe the wall is red.*

Best defense: Every view about perception must bite the bullet somewhere.

Most popular defense: You cannot be *certain* that you have a reddish experience until noon.

Reply to popular defense: This could only account for a *slight* increase in your justification at noon, not the *substantial* increase that PERCEPTUAL PARTIALITY predicts.

(Option 2) *Licensing Chauvinism: Knowing you have a reddish experience is as good as having it.*

(TWO PERCEIVERS SEQUEL) All is as before in the TWO PERCEIVERS case. But then, without being told whether you or Other will be the agent to have their blindfold removed, you are told that whoever has their blindfold removed will seem to see a red wall. A few minutes pass, and you are given the further information that you will be the one whose blindfold is removed.

Option 2 says that learning you will be the one whose blindfold is removed gives you *stronger* justification to believe that the wall is red. But it seems irrational to become *more confident* that the wall is red after learning this.

(Option 3) *Rejecting Evidentialism: Knowing about a reddish experience you have reduces your total justification for believing that the wall is red.*

Apparent conflict with evidentialism: 'I have a reddish experience' is not opposing evidence that the wall is not red, nor undermining evidence attacking the reliability of your source.

(Trilemma) PERCEPTUAL PARTIALITY forces us to accept one of Options 1-3.

Reject 2 → knowing Other has reddish experience \geq knowing you have reddish experience

Reject 1 → knowing you have reddish experience \geq having reddish experience & knowing it

Reject 3 → having reddish experience & knowing it \geq having reddish experience

So, reject all of 1-3 → knowing Other has reddish experience \geq having reddish experience
(which contradicts PERCEPTUAL PARTIALITY)