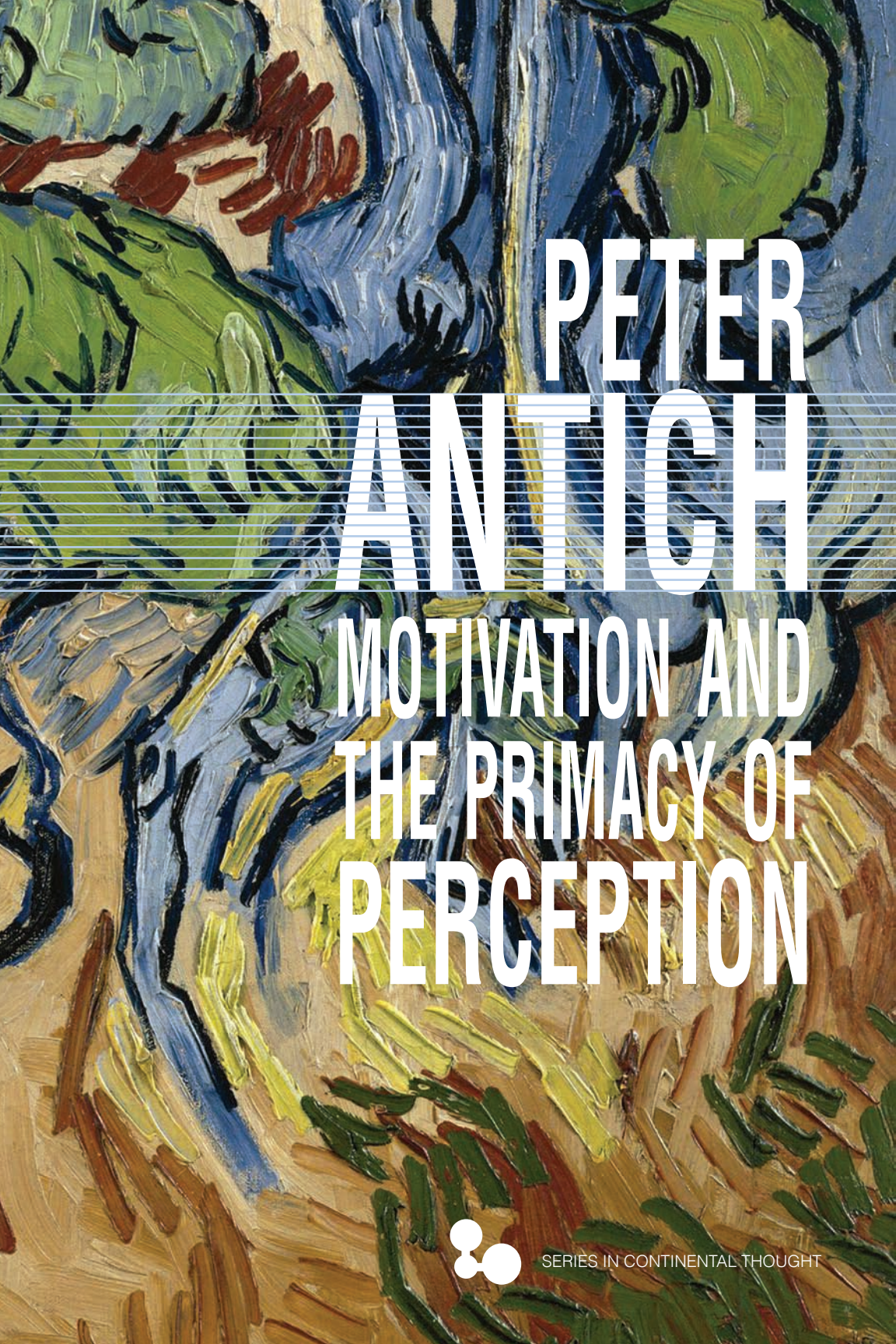
PETER
ANTICH
MOTIVATION AND
THE PRIMACY OF
PERCEPTION
SERIES IN CONTINENTAL THOUGHT

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Motivation and the Primacy of Perception

Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Knowledge

Peter Antich

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To all my teachers

The progress of the inquiry toward the *center* is not the movement from the conditioned unto the condition, from the founded unto the *Grund*: the so-called *Grund* is *Abgrund*. But the abyss one thus discovers is not such *by lack of ground*, it is upsurge of a *Hoheit* which supports from above.

—Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*

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ABBREVIATIONS

Referenced works by Merleau-Ponty are abbreviated as follows:

IP *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954–1955)*. Edited by Dominique Darmaillacq, Claude Lefort, and Stéphanie Ménasé. Translated by Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010.

PhP *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes. New York: Routledge, 2012.

PrP *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*. Edited by James M. Edie. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

PrW *The Prose of the World*. Edited by Claude Lefort. Translated by John O'Neill. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

SB *The Structure of Behavior*. Translated by Alden L. Fisher. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1963.

SN *Sense and Non-Sense*. Translated by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992.

VI *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

INTRODUCTION

Epistemology has traditionally operated on a dichotomy between two sorts of grounds: reasons and causes. According to this dichotomy, we can understand why we believe what we do either in terms of reasons that justify our beliefs or in terms of causal interactions that explain them. This, for example, is the dichotomy that Sellars and McDowell give expression to in distinguishing between a "logical space of reasons" and a "logical space of nature." In the logical space of reasons, according to Sellars, we are concerned with the *justification* of beliefs (i.e., with the giving and taking of reasons in favor of a belief). In contrast, in the logical space of nature we are concerned with *explanation*. In understanding how the interactions between our senses and the world cause us to have certain sensations, for instance, we do no more than *explain* our sensations. There is no question here of giving reasons that support our sensations, or of asking whether it is right to have just these sensations and not others, but only of understanding how we come to have them.

The first thesis of this book is that the dichotomy of reason and causality is a false one: these two forms of grounding, while genuine forms of grounding with respective and exclusive domains, are not exhaustive of the forms of epistemic grounding. A central contention of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* is that neither reason nor causality correctly describes the sort of grounding relations characteristic of perception. To understand perception, he argues, we need to introduce a new way of thinking about grounds, namely, what he—following the phenomenological tradition—calls "motivation" (*PhP*, 51). Now, motivation has long been understood as a distinct form of grounding in the practical sphere (i.e., as playing a role in grounding the will, and a role not identical with reason or natural causality). But Merleau-Ponty argues that motivation, properly understood, names a form of grounding operative in various domains of human experience: motivation is also a perceptual and an epistemic ground.

In the following chapters, I take up this thought, arguing that there is a form of epistemic grounding that does not amount to justification, but that also does not merely explain our beliefs. Instead, perception *motivates* our belief. If we consider for a moment the actual character of our belief in the world, we find that we exist in the world long before there is any question of the world's existence. Indeed, perception convinces us so thoroughly of the world it presents that when a child first questions this conviction, she may experience this moment as a genuine event. At least in the first instance, perception does not give us reasons that justify our beliefs about the world, but simply gives us over to belief. It is in this difference between "giving over" and justification that skeptical projects take root. For when the question of the world's existence does emerge, it will seem as if perception, not justifying our faith in the world, merely explains it. Or, on the other hand, we might take perception as one reason among many that factor into our deliberations about the world's existence. But neither of these options describes the primary bond between perception and belief in the world, in which perception is not a mere consideration in favor of a belief nor a contingent fact that explains our attitudes. Instead, I will argue, first of all we find our belief motivated by perception.

Understanding the grounding relation between perception and knowledge in terms of motivation leads me to my second thesis: that all our knowledge is founded in perceptual experience. Perception and knowledge stand in what Husserl would call a *Fundierung* relation—as Merleau-Ponty would define it, a two-way relation in which the founded is inseparable from, or demands supplementation by, the founding, and the founding requires clarification and determination by the founded (cf. *PhP*, 128, 414). Merleau-Ponty's point, then, is not to dissolve any distinction between perception and knowledge, nor to reduce knowledge to perception; it is only to show how knowledge has its ground within perception. This is part of the thesis of, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, the "primacy of perception," namely, that "the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence"—a thesis that, he claims, "does not destroy either rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth" (*PrP*, 13). On the interpretation I will provide, it is only Merleau-Ponty's concept of motivation that will allow us to get this thesis of "the primacy of perception" properly into view. For, as we will see, the primacy of perception provides an essentially different account of knowledge than does either rationalism or empiricism—the philosophical options that cut to the core of modern epistemology—and only once we

cease to approach the relation between experience and knowledge in terms of causality and reason are we truly free to move past the various guises of the debate between these two.

In brief, we will see that motivation amounts to a new concept of epistemic ground. A careful phenomenology of knowledge will lead us to ground knowledge in motivation, and to distinguish motivation from justification and explanation. If these conclusions prove true, then we will also need a new account of knowledge, one centered not around justification or explanation, but around this new form of epistemic ground. The central aim of the present work is to provide an interpretation and defense of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of knowledge as giving us just such an account.

METHOD

A few methodological points need to be made from the beginning. First, what I provide here is, primarily, a work of phenomenology. That is to say, my subject will not *primarily* be knowledge as a theoretical desideratum, a behavior (at least, as this term has traditionally been understood), a bearer of epistemic import, et cetera. Rather, my subject is knowledge as a kind of *experience*. That is, I take knowledge to be a distinctive type of intentional state, with a special phenomenal character that distinguishes it as a class from perceptions, imaginations, wishes, and so on. In other words, I take knowledge as a phenomenon, as a mode in which the world *appears* to us. *How* the world appears to us in knowledge is different from how it appears to us in perceptions, such that knowledge has a unique phenomenal character. My goal is to describe this phenomenal character—or, if one wants, my goal is to describe "what it is like" to know.[1] But, on the other hand, while this is primarily a work of phenomenology, the phenomenological framework that I develop will also allow me to intervene in epistemological debates. In each chapter, I resolve an epistemological debate precisely by moving past the phenomenologically inadequate terms on which that debate trades.

There are some principled worries about whether one can legitimately connect phenomenology and epistemology in this way. On the one hand, one might wonder whether phenomenology can be used to answer epistemological questions. For example, as Pietersma has pointed out, the sort of externalist who thinks that justification has nothing to do with what is phenomenally available to subjects might deny that phenomenology can

help us with epistemological questions.[2] On the other, one might wonder whether phenomenology is properly interested in epistemological questions. For example, perhaps phenomenology is not really concerned with skeptical questions, since phenomenology seems to aim not at the justification of knowledge, but at the description of it.

Nevertheless, phenomenology *is* interested in the phenomenon of knowledge: in how knowledge is possible, how it is grounded, and what it is. Already in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl claimed to be concerned with "an objective *theory of knowledge* and . . . the *pure phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing*."[3] In my view, there is no necessary distinction between the projects of grounding knowledge and of describing the grounds of knowledge, depending on how one undertakes them: if the labor of description, responsible just to the thing itself, leads one to characterize knowledge as well-grounded, then one also will have completed the project of grounding knowledge. Further, even were phenomenology not properly interested in epistemological debates, the debates into which I will intervene in the following chapters are stymied by an inadequate phenomenology of knowledge. Once the phenomenological backdrop of these debates is clarified, there is room for the debate itself to be reconfigured. Consequently, a phenomenology of knowledge at the very least has important consequences for epistemology.

Second, one might have concerns about whether the kinds of evidence I adduce in this work—which include psychology, literature, and the history of science—are admissible in a work of phenomenology. I don't see a sufficiently compelling principled reason for refusing these kinds of evidence. In my view, the projects of these fields are not utterly disjoint from the phenomenological project: these projects allow us to notice essential features of experience to which everyday experience may be blind, precisely because everyday experience aims not at itself, but at the world. For example, Knausgaard claims, "Writing is drawing the essence of what we know out of the shadows. That is what writing is about. Not what happens there, not what actions are played out there, but the *there* itself."[4] Literature, then, is a means of opening up the world by breaking through common experience's understanding of itself. Similarly, psychology allows us to loosen the bond between the subject and the world so as to attend to the ligaments of this bond. Of course, literature describes the particular and not the universal, and psychology treats the subject as "mundane" (i.e., as a piece of the world). Thus, the former seems to lack the eidetic reduction and the latter the phenomenological reduction. But these distinctions can-

not be so firmly drawn. Precisely at the heart of the particular, literature opens a world in which we find ourselves to varying degrees involved, expressed, challenged, and alienated. That is to say, in immersing us in the particularities of another life—both when it expresses our own lives and when it challenges the universality of our experiences—literature invites us into a truer understanding of the universal or the essential. Similarly, psychology illuminates our *experience*. It is true that psychology delivers results on the basis of particular, contingent cases. And yet contingency has the power to illuminate the necessary, which is why Merleau-Ponty can form conclusions about essential features of normal experience by analyzing non-normal cases. We see the value of "attention" in experience, for example, if we turn to cases of "neglect," as when patients who have functional visual systems cannot become aware of objects in some portion of the visual field. There is a sort of empirical eidetic variation at play in these cases: psychology makes manifest what results for perception if certain factors are altered. On the other hand, psychology is (in the phenomenological sense) "mundane": it treats the subject as a constituted fact within the world. Yet psychology does not fail to link up with our experience of the world; what psychology discovers of perception in operation allows us to reflect on the implicit structures of perception as lived.[5] Of course, there are essential differences between the scopes and methods of these fields, but this does not prevent phenomenology from learning from them, since each amounts—for phenomenology—to a distinctive manner of "drawing the essence of what we know out of the shadows."

Third, the scope of this book is both historical and systematic. My aim is to provide an interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and in doing so to discover a phenomenological account of epistemic grounding that can resolve epistemological debates. What I will try to do throughout this book is to provide an exposition of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of knowledge, to do so in an idiom that should make it available to a relatively broad philosophical audience, and to forward a nontrivial interpretative claim: that Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception ought to be understood in terms of motivation. However, the purpose of this exposition is not only to understand more deeply Merleau-Ponty's thinking, but in so doing to present Merleau-Ponty's rich epistemological insights—which have not been adequately appreciated—as affording us a live and compelling epistemological option, one that can contribute even to contemporary debates in analytic epistemology. I do not see these historical and systematic aims of this work as separable, since in my view the value

of providing an exposition of Merleau-Ponty's epistemology is inseparable from the strength of its insights: I have undertaken this study because in my view the more deeply we understand Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of knowledge, the more deeply we can understand our epistemic situation. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that to demonstrate the enduring value of Merleau-Ponty's thought, I carry his thought into contemporary debates that Merleau-Ponty himself, of course, did not consider. In these cases, my intent is to develop a position in these debates that is faithful to Merleau-Ponty's own work; my intent will be to establish what position Merleau-Ponty *should* take, given his existing commitments. What results from this project is, I believe, a genuinely Merleau-Pontian epistemological program.

Given the historical scope of this book, three notes on my interpretative method must be made. First, I will treat Merleau-Ponty's work throughout his career as relatively continuous, borrowing freely from different eras of his thinking. In the few cases where I find a potential problem in transposing concepts and terminology between works, I argue on the basis of those specific cases and not in terms of any general interpretative framework. Concern about such liberality is not wholly out of place, for there is a question about the continuity of Merleau-Ponty's thinking. Barbaras, for example, pursues a developmental hypothesis, according to which Merleau-Ponty's thinking makes an ontological turn from a "phenomenology of perception" to a "*philosophy* of perception, discovering in perception a mode of being that holds good for every possible being."[6] Or, Gardner argues that the *Phenomenology of Perception* is read along two lines, one psychological, more in conformity with Merleau-Ponty's early work; and another transcendental, in conformity with Merleau-Ponty's later work.[7] And there are other such distinctions one could draw.[8] Certainly, Merleau-Ponty's thinking changes over the course of his career, but I tend to think that it deepens, rather than reverses itself, from the *Phenomenology* to *The Visible and the Invisible*—at least with reference to the questions that will concern us.[9]

Second, I should say something about how I understand Merleau-Ponty's method. Of course, debates about Merleau-Ponty's method get quite involved, and this is not a place for a decisive contribution. While I want to avoid idle classification of Merleau-Ponty's project—especially since Merleau-Ponty's philosophy puts classifications like "phenomenological" and "transcendental" in question—I should at least sketch the contours of how I will read Merleau-Ponty. In brief, I interpret Merleau-Ponty as employing a form of phenomeno-

logical method throughout the material that I draw on. I think Joel Smith's analysis in "Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenological Reduction" is basically right in its argument that Merleau-Ponty adopts a form of the phenomenological reduction—put crudely, he is concerned to describe the world *as it appears*—though not an idealist metaphysics.[10] There is a related question about whether Merleau-Ponty is undertaking a transcendental project. In my view, there is no simple answer to this question. But basically—and while I don't wish to hinge my analyses in this book on this answer—I believe something like Gardner's reading of Merleau-Ponty as a transcendental philosopher (i.e., as investigating the conditions for the possibility of experience) is correct, with the proviso that transcendental philosophy isn't left unchanged by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy (in some sense, as we will see in chapter 6, Merleau-Ponty is also concerned with the conditions for the possibility of transcendental philosophy).[11]

Third, in illustrating or arguing in favor of Merleau-Ponty's ideas, I will often draw freely from the phenomenological tradition. Generally speaking, this move does not seem problematic to me, given that Merleau-Ponty himself draws much of his thinking relatively freely from the phenomenological tradition. This is not to assume that Merleau-Ponty's thinking is in every respect compatible with Husserl's, Stein's, or Heidegger's, only that Merleau-Ponty relies to a considerable extent on arguments and descriptions provided by this tradition, and so it is reasonable to invoke these arguments and descriptions to understand Merleau-Ponty's own arguments.

Finally, my interest in the thesis of the primacy of perception is narrower than Merleau-Ponty's. In this book, I will be concerned with the primacy of perception as an epistemological thesis. But I take it that for Merleau-Ponty, this thesis is not only epistemological, but also ontological.[12] I will, in general, avoid the ontological dimension of Merleau-Ponty's project. I do not mean to imply that these two dimensions are ultimately separable, but I do suppose that the epistemological dimension can be treated in relative isolation from the ontological one.[13]

OVERVIEW

This book falls into three main parts. In the first, I define the two theses I intend to advocate, namely, that motivation is an epistemic ground and the primacy of perception. I take up the first of these in chapter 1, explaining

what it means to consider motivation as an epistemic ground and showing that motivation is not reducible to either causality or reason. In brief, I define motivation as a form of grounding that is spontaneous, operates in virtue of implicit meanings, and is normative. This allows me to argue that motivation is not a species of reason, because whereas reason is active and explicit, motivation is spontaneous and implicit. Further, motivation is not a species of causality, because causality is passive, does not operate in virtue of meanings at all, and is not normative.

In chapter 2, I explain and argue for my interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception. Here I define key elements of my account, such as how I understand perception and knowledge, and what it means to read the "primacy of perception" thesis in terms of motivation. Once these ideas are in place, I attempt to provide a definition of knowledge that is compatible with my Merleau-Pontian account of epistemic grounding.

Part 2 of the book, composed of chapters 3 through 5, argues for this view. First, in chapter 3, I consider the relation between experience and judgments of experience. The existing debate about perceptual grounding tends to hold that perception either causes our beliefs, implying some sort of coherentism, or justifies them, entailing a kind of foundationalism. I argue that this debate is rooted in an inadequate phenomenology of the relation between experience and judgment. In fact, neither reason nor causality properly describes this relation, for this relation is spontaneous (and not active, as it would have to be if it were relation of reasoning) and normative (and so cannot be merely causal). Motivation, I conclude, does a better job of describing the grounding relation between experience and empirical judgment. This leaves us with an account that accommodates some of the insights of both coherentism and foundationalism.

In chapter 4, I turn to the relation between experience and *a priori* judgments (by which I mean judgments that no particular experience directly fulfills, that is, universal and necessary judgments). While it is obvious that experience in some sense grounds our empirical judgments, it is not at all obvious that it grounds our a priori judgments. Indeed, rationalists have long held that experience is just not the sort of thing that *can* ground a priori judgments, because experience delivers particular and contingent facts, while a priori judgments must hold universally and with necessity. Empiricists, in contrast, have argued that our "a priori" knowledge must be derived from experience. In chapter 4, I argue that thinking the relation between experience and the a priori in terms of motivation, as Merleau-Ponty does, allows us to

accommodate both these insights. On the one hand, I suggest, against empiricism, that the content and evidence of our a priori knowledge cannot be definable in terms of experiential content and evidence. On the other, against rationalism, I propose that there must be some sense in which experience *can* ground a priori knowledge. In my view, an account of a priori knowledge in terms of motivation meets both these desiderata, since it explains how experience, though contingent and particular, can ground universal and necessary judgments.

Then, in chapter five, I consider Merleau-Ponty's response to skepticism, namely, in terms of his notion of perceptual faith. I argue that we cannot understand perceptual faith—our belief in the connection between appearance and being—in terms of either justification or causality. Instead, we should think of perceptual faith as motivated. Doing so will allow us to understand Merleau-Ponty's claim that "the primacy of perception . . . is the remedy to skepticism and pessimism" (*PrP*, 26), while avoiding any sort of dogmatism about perception.

Chapters 6 and 7 compose part 3, in which I consider some major consequences of the view I develop. I do this by engaging Merleau-Ponty's position with Kant's. Doing so not only brings into focus the originality of Merleau-Ponty's epistemological views, but allows me to investigate a major consequence of Merleau-Ponty's account, namely, where it leaves metaphysics. In my view, Kant provides the major alternative resolution to the rationalism-empiricism debate. He does this by developing a novel form of justification: transcendental justification. Kant's whole critique of metaphysics centers around his claim that the ground of a priori synthetic knowledge is *experience*, considered with respect to its possibility. Transcendental method justifies certain judgments a priori by showing them to be conditions for the possibility of experience. In chapter 6, I consider this type of a priori justification.

My contention is that, contrary to appearances, the projects of Merleau-Ponty and Kant are largely compatible. This is because the two projects operate on different levels: they are concerned with different senses of experience and so approach experience with different standards. Whereas Merleau-Ponty is concerned with experience understood as perception, and so approaches experience with the standard of motivation, Kant is concerned with experience in the sense of empirical judgment, and so approaches experience with the standard of justification. The many seemingly opposed conclusions they reach are consequences of their pursuing investigations on different levels with different standards. If I am right that the two differ in focus, then we

shouldn't think of Kant's conditions for the possibility of experience as conditions for the possibility of perception in Merleau-Ponty's sense. However, I will argue, transcendental justification *does* ultimately rely upon an a priori that is not transcendentally justified, but instead motivated in the course of experience, in the manner I describe in chapter 4.

In chapter 7, I consider where these results leave Kant's critique of metaphysics. I argue that, given my account of knowledge, Kant must be right that no synthetic a priori judgments can be justified through reason alone. However, this does not mean that experience cannot *motivate* synthetic a priori judgments, ultimately, in a manner that we will have to analyze in terms of Merleau-Ponty's concept of "reversibility," entailing a sort of dialectical approach to metaphysics. I make this point with respect to a particular metaphysical question discussed by Kant, that of the Third Paralogism, namely, self-identity.

PART I

Defining the Account

CHAPTER 1

MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF MOTIVATION

Though, as we will see, motivation plays a significant role throughout Merleau-Ponty's corpus, the principal texts in which he articulates this concept occupy only a few pages (*PhP*, 47–51).[1] To draw out this phenomenon, then, we will have to do considerable interpretative work, and this is the task of the present chapter.

In brief, the point of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of motivation in the *Phenomenology of Perception* is that it allows us to understand an essential fact about perception, namely, that the world comes to us as already bearing a sense. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, perception presents us with a "spontaneous valuation [*valorisation spontanée*]" (*PhP*, 465), or we might also say a "spontaneous sense." For example, consider the Gestalt theory result that the following series

. . . .

is always perceived as "six groups of dots, two millimeters apart." I do not see the dots, and *then* see them grouped thus. Indeed, there is no need for me to arrange them. I just find them that way. In Merleau-Ponty's words, "Everything happens as if, prior to our judgment and our freedom, someone were allocating such and such a sense to such and such a given constellation" (*PhP*, 465). What examples like this show, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that perception reveals the world as meaningful, as laden with a sense that we do not actively attribute to the world. At the same time, neither can we say that this meaning is simply in the objects, considered apart from us, since, for example, there is nothing about the physical properties of the dots that requires one grouping rather than another. Instead, the grouping must arise spontaneously, through the contact between myself and the world, or, rather, through perception itself. "Motivation" describes the process through which these spontaneous meanings arise, that is, the way in which they are grounded.

First, let me try to get a basic ontology of motivation into view. I understand motivation as a *type of grounding*. In thinking of motivation as a ground, I understand grounding in a broad sense, largely abstracted from many of the concerns raised in the contemporary literature on grounding. I'll simply say that if *X* grounds *Y*, then *X* answers "why?" questions about *Y*. As such, grounds are relations: grounding is a relation that grounding and grounded bear toward each other.

Now, there is more than one way to answer "why?" questions. I briefly touched on two kinds of answers in the introduction: explanation (causality) and justification (reason). My general contention is that motivation offers a third kind of answer, one not reducible to justification or explanation. Motivation, as we will see, is the form of grounding characteristic of our bodily spontaneity. As such, it can be found throughout human experience: there are motives for action, motives for perception, motives for beliefs, et cetera.[2] Since Merleau-Ponty treats motivation primarily in the context of perception, I will, in this chapter, focus on motivation as a perceptual ground. In later chapters, I will consider how motivation works as a ground of beliefs (i.e., as an epistemic ground).

So, in brief, motivation, like reasons or natural causes, is a type of grounding relation. Naturally, different kinds of things can serve as grounds and different kinds of things can be grounded. Substances, events, actions, properties, and so on all can answer or be the object of "Why?" questions. But we can be more specific about the kinds of things that can stand in motivational relations. In speaking of motivation, we are, according to Merleau-Ponty, speaking about a relation between *phenomena* or meanings. As he puts it, motivation allows us to describe how "one phenomenon triggers another, not through some objective causality [*efficacité objective*], such as one linking together the events of nature, but rather through the sense [*sens*] it offers" (*PhP*, 51). So, Merleau-Ponty conceives motivation as a grounding relation not between events in the natural world, but between phenomena or meanings.

At the same time, neither does Merleau-Ponty think of motivation as the product of purely active, mental control, the way our judgments or decisions are supposed to be the product of mental activity. Instead, in a manner we will have to spell out in the following, Merleau-Ponty thinks of motivation as the form of grounding characteristic of our bodily spontaneity. To be clear, in speaking of the body in this way, I am not thinking of the body as simply another natural object, but as what we might call the "lived body" (i.e., the body my experience inhabits and that bears my experience into the world).

So when I speak of our bodily spontaneity, I have in mind, for example, the way our perceptual capacities are spontaneously attuned to the perceptual field so as to make sense of it, prior to my active, mental deliberation and judgment. Provisionally, then, we can provide the following description of motivation: motivation is a grounding relation that phenomena or meanings (*sens*) can bear toward each other in virtue of our bodily spontaneity.

But, in order to understand what distinguishes motivation from reason or causality, I need to be more precise about the kind of grounding relation we are dealing with. This is the purpose of the present chapter. Specifically, I will forward nine claims about motivation. These claims are not meant to compose an exhaustive list of the distinctive features of motivation, but simply to capture Merleau-Ponty's main claims about this form of grounding and to identify those features that will be indispensable in the coming chapters. These claims are the following:

1. Motivation is spontaneous (i.e., embodied).
2. Motives don't require explicit awareness to operate.
3. Motives operate through their meaning.
4. Motivation is an internal relation.
5. Motivation is a reciprocal relation.
6. Motivation tends to equilibrium and determinacy.
7. Motivation can be normative.
8. The output of motivation transcends its input.
9. Motives are neither reasons nor causes.

Before I defend these claims, however, let me provide a few examples of perceptual motivation, which will help anchor my discussion.

THE SHIPWRECK

Merleau-Ponty writes, "If I am walking on a beach toward a boat that has run aground, and if the funnel or the mast merges with the forest that borders the dune, then there will be a moment in which these details suddenly reunite with the boat and become welded to it" (*PhP*, 17). What he describes here is a perceptual gestalt shift: a scene that had appeared as a bank of trees is reinterpreted as a shipwreck. Ordinarily in such cases, one does not begin by noting various incongruities, for example, in the interpretation of the

vertical poles as tree trunks—perhaps that they are too long or too short, not quite the right color, or that they lack branches—and then deliberately suggesting a new interpretation. While it is certainly *possible* to proceed in this manner, one need not, and more likely, something like the following occurs. As one approaches the ship a vague sense of tension within one's perception will grow; one senses a problem in the interpretation, without being able to adduce evidence for the problem (just as, for example, one can sense that something has changed in a room without being able to identify the difference), perhaps without ever yet paying attention to the building awareness of a problem. And then, suddenly, and without one's express decision, a resolution announces itself in the form of a new grouping of the perceptual field: one sees the scene anew, now in a more stable, more complete perception.

THE BELL TOWER

> Objects interposed between me and the one I am focusing upon are not perceived for themselves. But they are, nevertheless, perceived, and we have no reason to deny this marginal perception a role in the vision of distance since the apparent distance shrinks the moment a screen hides the interposed objects. The objects that fill the field do not act on the apparent distance like a cause on its effect. When the screen is moved aside, we see the distance being born from the interposed objects. This is the silent language perception speaks to us: the interposed objects, in this natural text, "mean" a larger distance. It is, nevertheless, not a question of the logic of constituted truth (one of the connections that objective logic knows), for there is *no reason* for the bell tower to appear to me as smaller and farther away the moment that I can see more clearly the details of the hills and the fields that separate me from it. There is no reason, but there is a *motive*. (*PhP*, 49–50)

The presence of objects interposed between myself and an object to which I am attending motivates a sense of the size and distance of the object. I needn't *attend* to the hill for it to make the bell tower appear farther away, and yet the moment the hill is blocked from view, the perceived distance shrinks.

THE MOON

The same is true of the perceived size of the moon. I see the full moon on the horizon as large, and as smaller the farther it travels into the night sky (cf. *PhP*, 270–71). But if, as the moon sits large just above the horizon, I screen the horizon from my vision, the moon will suddenly shrink. Unknown to me, the proximity of the moon to the horizon motivates my perception of the moon's size. Thus, in proximity to the terrestrial world, the moon appears large; adrift in the sky, it appears modest. Of course, I do not *think* (i.e., judge) that the moon actually shrinks as it rises or as I screen the horizon from view—but I do *see* it as smaller. Merleau-Ponty writes, "The parts of the [perceptual] field act upon each other and *motivate* this enormous moon on the horizon, this measureless size that is nevertheless a size" (*PhP*, 34).

THE PORTRAIT

> It took centuries of painting before the reflections upon the eye were seen, without which the painting remains lifeless and blind. . . . The reflection is not seen for itself, since it was able to go unnoticed for so long, and yet it has a function in perception, since its mere absence is enough to remove the life and the expression from objects and from faces. The reflection is only seen out of the corner of the eye. It is not presented as the aim of our perception, it is the auxiliary or the mediator of our perception. It is not itself seen, but makes the rest be seen. (*PhP*, 322–23)

The presence of a reflection in a portrait subject's eye transforms our perception of the subject, imbuing it with the quality of liveliness.[3] Supposing it took centuries for the reflection to be noticed for itself, it must have this effect without being explicitly recognized by the viewer. There are thus grounds at work in perception to the function of which explicit attention is accidental, attendant at most.

I take it that each of these perceptions is grounded in a common manner: they arise spontaneously, without the intervention of active thinking. Let us say, then, provisionally, that these perceptions are motivated. Assuming there

is a phenomenon common to these cases, let us now attempt to define its essential features.

1. MOTIVATION IS SPONTANEOUS (I.E., EMBODIED)

I started by noting that motivation is responsible for the spontaneous sense we find in experience. More fundamentally, this means that motivation, as a process of grounding, occurs spontaneously. In Merleau-Ponty's usage, a process is "spontaneous" if it is not the product of *active* decision. I do not decide upon a course of motivation, nor do I actively forge the relation between a motive and its *motivatum*. Instead, a motive spontaneously grounds its *motivatum*, presenting me with a sense about which I can only subsequently make decisions. As we just saw, the moon appears larger the closer it is to the horizon, but not because I have decided to see the moon as larger. Indeed, I may well decide that this change in appearance is irrational, since I know that the moon itself has neither shrunk nor retreated into the distance. Motivation is, then, not entirely within the realm of responsibility. But neither is it simply passive, something we receive from the world. What *is* simply passive, namely, the optical image of the moon, is largely unchanged by the moon's course in the night sky. And if the transformation in appearance cannot be grounded in the efficacy of the world alone, then it must be partially grounded in me, or, rather, in my perceptual capacities. In this sense, the transformation is neither active nor passive, but spontaneous.

To be clear, then, I understand spontaneity in distinction from both activity (the sort of direct control we exercise, for example, in making decisions) and passivity (the mere receptivity we have with respect, for example, to the light entering the cornea and having certain causal effects on the brain). In my opening example, the gestalt "six groups of dots two millimeters apart" is spontaneously attributed to the series; it is not the product of decision or deliberation, and if asked I can give no reason as to why they should be grouped this way rather than another. Perhaps I can attempt to *rationalize* the grouping (e.g., "It makes sense to group dots that are closer together"). But these rationalizations are purely speculative, since I have no access to having been guided by such reasons. More importantly, if I happened to have reasons favoring an alternate grouping, I would not be able simply to revise my perception. For example, in the case of the Müller-Lyer illusion (see fig. 1.1), my "spontaneous valuation" of the lines as of different lengths or as

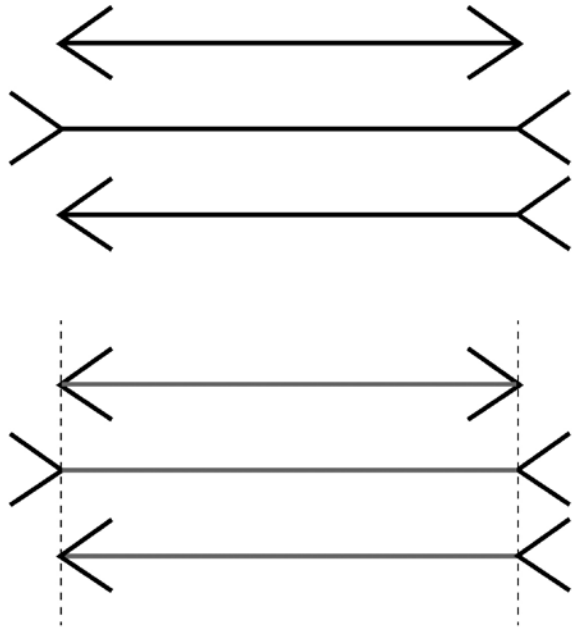

FIGURE 1.1. Müller-Lyer illusion. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

ambiguously long conflicts with the reasons I have for thinking they are exactly the same length (e.g., that I have measured the lines). So, while I am free actively to affirm or deny the spontaneous sense that I perceive, I am not free to alter this sense itself: despite my knowledge to the contrary, the lines still appear unequal.

Of course, it's entirely plausible that perception *is* sometimes *influenced* by our active capacities. If a friend sees a different gestalt before us than I see, I will ask myself, "Could it be like she says?" Then it can happen that as I search the image, somehow the perceptual field changes, and my friend's interpretation comes into view. It is true, at times, of perception that if I seek, I shall find. I have some leeway with respect to my perception of ambiguous figures, for example. But it does not always happen this way. I cannot always make myself see even what I know to be true: for example, I can know that the Müller-Lyer lines are equal, and yet see them only as ambiguously long or as unequal. The point is simply that perceptual sense is not *wholly* shaped by our active capacities, and indeed often resists these active capacities. If perception is *at most* partially grounded by my activity, then it must be *at least* partially grounded in some other manner.

Motivation, then, is spontaneous. But if we cannot attribute the spontaneity to my active decision-making nor to the world itself, to what should we attribute it? Merleau-Ponty's answer is that this spontaneity pertains to the body, or, rather, to one's bodily attunement to the perceptual field. It is my body—more particularly, my perceptual capacities—that knows how to construe the perceptual field (e.g., to read size in the proximity of perceptual givens). My sight discovers the shipwreck in the perceptual field and cannot help but see liveliness where light inhabits the eye. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "Every perception . . . is presented to us as anonymous. . . . Between my sensation and myself, there is always the thickness of an *originary acquisition* that prevents my experience from being clear for itself" (*PhP*, 223–24). This originary acquisition is the body and its familiarity with the world. The body is, as it were, the "anonymous" subject of perception, attuned to the significances of the perceptual field, and fluent in "the silent language perception speaks to us" (*PhP*, 50).[4] Thus, in speaking of the spontaneity of motivation, I am referring to a specifically bodily spontaneity, which, for Merleau-Ponty, names our familiarity with the world prior to our active comportment and cognition.

2. MOTIVES DON'T REQUIRE EXPLICIT AWARENESS TO OPERATE

As a consequence of its spontaneous character, motivation does not require explicit awareness to have its effect: one needn't explicitly attend to a motive in order for it to motivate. The reflection in the eye, for example, allows us to see life, and yet it remained absent so long from painting presumably because it wasn't explicitly noticed by painters. Not seen for itself, the reflection belonged only to the background of perception. Similarly, I may be so captivated by the moon that I pay no attention to the horizon above which it hovers, and yet the horizon, present only in the background of the perception, motivates the moon's perceived size.

Of course, nothing here forbids explicit positing; while at least some motives *can* be raised to explicit awareness, doing so need not affect the process of motivation. I can, for example, stop and note the hill between myself and the tower, and explicitly take it as an index of distance. But once a screen is placed between me and the hill, the tower's perceived distance shrinks again. Motivation proceeds largely (though not necessarily entirely) indifferently to and independently of explicit awareness, even where the latter is present.

3. MOTIVES OPERATE THROUGH THEIR MEANING

Though motivation is spontaneous and does not require explicit consciousness, neither is it a purely physical process. As we saw, one phenomenon gives rise to another, according to Merleau-Ponty, not through objective causation, but through "the sense [*sens*] it offers" (*PhP*, 51). Motives, in other words, operate through their meanings.[5] Nothing about the bare sensation of a small white patch per se, for example, motivates a perception of liveliness. Instead, the white patch motivates only *as the reflection* (i.e., because it is invested with the familiar meaning of the reflection in the eye).

Note that Merleau-Ponty's term is the French *sens*, which I translate interchangeably as "meaning" or "sense." I choose to translate *sens* as both sense and meaning largely as a matter of convenience—there are a number of occasions where consistently translating the term in one way or another would strike our ears as odd and create unnecessary difficulties. I certainly don't intend to suggest any systematic difference between the terms. I am not drawing any kind of distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, for example, or between nonlinguistic and linguistic meanings.

But what kind of "meaning" is at stake here? Evidently not meaning in the sense of linguistic signification. Instead, Merleau-Ponty clearly has in mind some kind of directly perceivable meaning. Merleau-Ponty's account of *sens* is of course a large and interesting topic, but what we need is just enough of an account to distinguish between meaningful and nonmeaningful relations, and to see in what sense perceptual grounding relations are meaningful.[6] To this end, I'll first say a little about what Merleau-Ponty means by "*sens*," and then explain how this suggests a criterion for distinguishing meaningful from nonmeaningful relations.

One way Merleau-Ponty introduces the notion of *sens* is in terms of perceptual *Gestalten*.[7] Thus, in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes,

> Consider a white patch against a homogenous background. All points on the patch have a certain common "function" that makes them into a "figure." The figure's color is denser and somehow more resistant than the background's color. The borders of the white patch "belong" to the patch and, despite being contiguous with it, do not join with the background. The patch seems to be placed upon the background and does not interrupt it. Each part announces

> more than it contains, and thus this elementary perception is already charged with a *sense* [sens]. (4)

Perception is meaningful, according to Merleau-Ponty, because it is primordially composed of a figure on a background. In other words, perception does not give us a set of mutually indifferent atomic sensations. Instead, it gives us an arrangement, a whole, or a figure, which is discriminated from a background (i.e., from what is not the figure). Because in perception the figure or the whole is primordial, each part is not isolated from the others, but "announces more than it contains." This "announcing" beyond itself—the intrinsic relation to the whole—implies that the part has a *sense*. Sense, then, for Merleau-Ponty, fundamentally names the way in which experience is composed of organized wholes or structures.[8] To make sense of a situation is to resolve the givens of a situation into a coherent structure.

Discerning a perceptual whole, a figure, is a matter of sense, because the figure given in a perception is inseparable from that *as which* I intend that figure: how I group or organize a sensory field depends on that *as which* I perceive the sensory field. For example, in the "Rubin's vase" optical illusion (fig. 1.2), I group the field differently—discriminating differently between foreground and background—according to that *as which* the sensory field presents itself (namely, as a vase or as two contraposed faces). What defines the figure is, then, just the meaning or sense it presents (i.e., that *as which* the figure presents itself). In other words, a perceptual figure is characterized by something like Heidegger's hermeneutical "as structure."

Further, we can distinguish a meaning from the object or event that it intends. One and the same hill has quite a different perceptual meaning if it is presented to me as interposed between me and the bell tower than if I survey it from above, from a bird's-eye view. In the one case, the hill participates in a field of depth absent in the other. The same is true in terms of nonperceptual meanings. For example, the phrases "the fifteenth state incorporated into the Union" and "the Bluegrass State" have the same referent but different meanings, since nothing in the meaning of "the Bluegrass State" necessarily implies that it is the fifteenth state incorporated into the Union. One could think of Kentucky *as* either of these things, but this does not imply that the two meanings are the same. A similar idea would be expressed in saying that meaning is *intensional* rather than *extensional* (though, again, I am not concerned with specifically linguistic meanings).

FIGURE 1.2. Rubin's vase. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

With this basic understanding of meaning, we can supply a criterion for distinguishing grounds that operate in virtue of their meaning from those that don't. A ground that operates in virtue of its meaning will operate in virtue of that *as which* it is a ground. Less precisely, we can formulate this criterion in the following test: a ground can be said to operate in virtue of its meaning if the terms used to describe that ground determine the truth value of statements about the grounding relationship. To borrow an example from Merleau-Ponty, imagine that upon the death of a close friend, I undertake a journey in order to pay my respects or comfort the grieving family (cf. *PhP*, 270). There are all sorts of features of my friend that could be used accurately to describe her: suppose besides being my friend, she used to reside at 71 East Fifth Street and on Saturdays volunteered at the local animal shelter. She could be intended under any of these meanings. If someone approached me and asked why I was traveling, I could truly respond, "Because my friend has died." However, I would respond falsely were I to say, "Because of the death of the Saturday animal shelter volunteer," or "Because of the death of the resident of 71 East Fifth Street." These descriptors of my friend are not incorrect, but it *is* incorrect to frame the *motives* of my journey in these terms. It is only *as of my friend* that the loss touches me, only *as my friend's* that the death summons.

In contrast, because causal relations hold not between meanings but between objects, events, or states of affairs, it is a matter of indifference what terms are used to describe the *relata*: if asked why a pool ball is in motion, one can answer as truly "Because it was struck by the 9 ball" as "Because it was struck by the yellow-striped ball" as "Because it was struck by a collection of matter with the requisite momentum"; there is no accurate description of the ball that would not suffice to explain the grounding it contributes.

Of course, we are fundamentally interested not in how one linguistically describes an object, event, or state of affairs, but in the perceptual meaning to which this description is responsible. Even if implicit and prelinguistic, a motive has its effect through its meaning or structure. For example, the interposed hill is a motive for seeing the bell tower as distant *only as an interposed hill* (i.e., as part of the perceived structuring of distances I have in view); if instead I survey the scene from above, the hill no longer has any value for the perceived distance of the bell tower. Thus, meaningful relations are those in which the *relata* are related in terms of that *as which* they are intended, and motivational relations fit this criterion.

4. MOTIVATION IS AN INTERNAL RELATION

Merleau-Ponty also claims that motivation is an internal relation (*PhP*, 51), though what this means exactly is not entirely clear. One way to understand an "internal relation" is in the sense defined by G. E. Moore (i.e., that an internal relation is a necessary one, such that if the *relata* exist, then they necessarily stand in the specified relation to one another). This is more or less the sense that O'Conaill,[9] following Morriston,[10] has attributed to Merleau-Ponty. O'Conaill writes that Merleau-Ponty understands an internal relation to be one in which "the relata are logically interdependent; that is, they cannot be defined independently of each other."[11] On this interpretation, Merleau-Ponty thinks a relation is internal only if the *relata* are inconceivable without one another, and therefore cannot exist without one another. But, as Morriston points out, if Merleau-Ponty understands internality in this strong sense of logical existential interdependence, then it seems like paradigmatic instances of motivation will not qualify as internal relations. Take again Merleau-Ponty's example of being motivated by a friend's death to undertake a journey—but a friend can die without my undertaking the journey, and, conversely, the journey can occur without the death. Thus, this motivational relationship would seem not to be internal.[12]

It seems to me that the error here is thinking of the dependence in terms of existence, rather than in terms of meaning. Morriston's concerns dissolve on the following definition: *relata* bear an internal relation if their meanings are mutually dependent. Morriston is of course right that the journey can occur without the death and the death without the journey. The *existence* of the one is not logically dependent on the existence of the other. However, the *meaning* of the one *is* dependent on the meaning of the other. Surely the journey means something very different without my friend's death (it is perhaps a vacation, and not a final visitation). Conversely, supposing I have the means and inclination to attend funerals, doesn't the death *mean* something different to me if I choose not to undertake the journey than if I do?

Or consider the notes of a melody. With the first note of a melody, we already have a vague horizon of meaning that will shape the meaning of every subsequent note. The sixth note will mean what it does only relative to the previous five: it conveys something it could not possibly convey were it played in isolation. Conversely, the first note is by itself indeterminate. It could be the beginning of any number of melodies, joyful, ironic, or somber. If we look back on this indeterminate first note from the vantage of the sixth, the first will no longer mean what it did: it will now appear as the inception of this particular (e.g., playful) tune, and so will sound, for example, playful. Of course, these notes could *exist* without the others. But they could not *mean* what they do without the others.

Similarly, according to Merleau-Ponty, the parts of a perceived form or structure bear an internal relation to each other. Merleau-Ponty writes, "The parts of a thing are not linked together by a simple external association. . . . There are no indifferent givens that together set about forming a thing because some factual contiguities or resemblances associate them. Rather, because we first perceive a whole as a thing, the analytic attitude can later discern resemblances or contiguities there" (*PhP*, 16). According to Merleau-Ponty, perceptions are not composed of elemental givens with independent meanings that can be indifferently synthesized into a whole. Rather, the meanings of the parts of perception depend on each other and on the whole. This is most obvious in cases of Gestalt reversibility, such as the illustration "My Wife and My Mother-in-Law" (see fig. 1.3). When one suddenly sees what was at first the young girl now as an old woman, all the parts will be concordantly redetermined: what was a chin is now a nose, an ear now an eye. The parts are not atoms of meaning, which, subsequent to their interpretation can be associated into a whole. Rather, they draw their meaning from the whole. Just so, the reflection

Figure 1.3. "My Wife and My Mother-in-Law". Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

in the eye can motivate a perception of the portrait *as* lively only because it is perceived *as* a reflection, and it can be perceived *as* a reflection only because its immediate environs are perceived *as* the eye.

This kind of internal relation stands in clear contrast to causal relations. While in both cases, the relation is the ground of a *relatum* being as it is, the causal relation can be merely the occasion for the *relatum* being as it is, whereas the internal relation sustains the *relatum* being as it is. For example, though the successive notes of a melody fall out of existence, the meaning of each sustains the meaning of each other, and were the others truly to be erased for us, the present note would lose its meaning. In contrast, one billiard ball driven to motion by another is subsequently entirely indifferent to the existence of the other. Thus, a cause can be an occasioning ground, while an internal relation (such as motivation) cannot.

5. MOTIVATION IS A RECIPROCAL RELATION

Whereas Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological predecessors, Husserl and Stein, clearly describe motives as internally related to their *motivata*, they do little to argue the reverse. But Merleau-Ponty clarifies that the internal relation between the motivating and the motivated is reciprocal. In other words, precisely through the meaning it motivates, the meaning of the motivating factor is itself transformed. I will call "proactive" the influence that the motivating factor has on the motivated, and "retroactive" the influence of the motivated on the motivating.

It is easy enough to see a retroactive effect in some cases of motivation. The example of the melody, given above, demonstrated this effect: the meaning of the first note is indeterminate until it is given a particular shape, mood, and force by the notes that follow—from out of the range of possible meanings established by the first note, the ensuing notes will select one and thereby determine the meaning of the first note in a particular manner. The same can be found, for example, in our interpretation of sentences. In a statement like "The mouse isn't working," both "mouse" and "working" can in different contexts take on different meanings (computer mouse/small, endearing rodent; functional/gainfully employed). In the above sentence, the former proactively determines the meaning of the latter, while the latter retroactively determines the meaning of the former: only in the community of meaning between the two do we settle on a determinate interpretation of the meaning of each.

Thus at least some relations of motivation are reciprocal (i.e., contain a retroactive effect). But should we think that all are? Merleau-Ponty seems to answer yes, on the grounds that at a minimum, every *motivatum* has the retroactive effect of explicating or validating its motive. He writes, "To the extent that the motivated phenomenon is brought about, its internal relation with the motivating phenomenon appears, and rather than merely succeeding it, the motivated phenomenon makes the motivating one explicit and clarifies it, such that the motivated seems to have preexisted its own motive" (*PhP*, 51). That the retroactive effect is one of explication is easy to see in the above examples. The sixth note explicates the first in the sense of giving a particular shape to what was the first's indeterminate meaning: out of an amorphous block of possibility, the sixth note does the work of carving a precise shape. The motivated clarifies the motive. Validation is one mode of such clarification or explication. This is how Merleau-Ponty describes the retroactive effect of undertaking the journey following a friend's death: "The motive [*motif*] is an antecedent that only acts through its sense [*sens*], and it must even be added that it is the decision that confirms this sense as valid and that gives it its force and its efficacy. Motive and decision are two elements of a situation: the first is the situation as a fact; the second is the situation taken up. . . . By deciding to undertake this journey, I validate this motive that is proposed and I take up this situation. The relation between motivating [*motivant*] and motivated [*motivé*] is thus reciprocal" (*PhP*, 270). Such validation is a kind of explication or clarification, because by itself the actual force of the motive is ambiguous. What does the death of my friend mean to me? Is it the sort of event that will motivate my journey, or does it sadden me but not compel the journey? Thus, it is only the *motivatum* that determines the actual force of the motive, and in this sense the decision validates the motive. It seems plausible that, at a minimum, such a retroactive effect of validation will be present in every case of motivation.

Note that according to Merleau-Ponty, through this retroactive component, motivation tends to obscure itself. Because the meaning of the motive is reinterpreted in light of its *motivatum*, the original situation of the motive tends to be forgotten or concealed. One remarkable feature of motivation is how immediately and totally this forgetting can occur. Once one has seen these elongated shapes as the masts of a ship, it will be impossible to see them otherwise: one cannot see tree trunks there any longer, nor the indeterminacy and the tension that posed to us questions and negotiated with us answers. The process of motivation conceals itself, in other words, because

it is so successful, which is why, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, "the motivated seems to have preexisted its own motive" (*PhP*, 51).

6. MOTIVATION TENDS TO EQUILIBRIUM AND DETERMINACY

Merleau-Ponty writes that the perception of distance, for example, arises as a transition from indeterminacy to "equilibrium" and determinacy (*PhP*, 51). Equilibrium and determinacy, then, serve as orienting features for motivation.

Let us think through why this is so. Motivational situations are composed of a variety of implicit motives, weighing on the sense of that situation in different directions. When motives conflict but none achieve dominance, we have a situation, perceptually, of uncertainty, or practically, of indecision. The experience of such situations is marked by the tension of conflicting motives. Such tension is resolved when a determination of the situation incorporates or reconciles a sufficient range of motives into a coherent whole, such that the tension is released, and a stable equilibrium of motives is reached. Generally speaking, determinations that more successfully resolve this tension, (i.e., which incorporate as many motives as possible, as coherently as possible) have more weight for us.

For example, walking down a street, I notice a figure staring out from behind a store window. The figure's form and pensive stance suggest I am seeing a person. Yet, as I approach, I begin to grow uncertain. Something in the person's appearance is not quite right: though I needn't note it explicitly, I sense the person's bearing is outlandish, their body inert and closed off, their figure not fully shaped. My sense of tension grows: the person becomes more uncanny. It suddenly occurs to me that what I see is not a person but a mannequin. With this determination, the tension is released. The interpretation "mannequin" reconciles the humanity of the form with the lifelessness of its bearing. My perceptual situation has achieved harmony through a determination that transforms the conflict of motives into an equilibrium.

Motives rarely (if ever) exist alone. Rather, they belong to complex motivational situations, within which various motives weigh on us in various directions and negotiate a determination of the situation.[13] In general, the process of motivation tends away from disharmony and tension toward equilibrium and stability, toward a "poise" between weights and counterweights. The less determinacy a situation has, the less stability it has, and

indeterminate situations are shot through with the possibility of collapsing. In the mannequin example above, the lack of initial determinacy allows the interpretation to dissolve into uncertainty. From a distance, I was able to see the figure as a person due to the lack of distinct perceptual information. But as I approach the situation becomes more determinate, and I am forced to abandon my previous interpretation, which in its collapse is revealed as having possessed only illusory stability.

7. MOTIVATION CAN BE NORMATIVE

Motivation does not simply bring about that I perceive some way or other; it does not simply *explain* our perceptions. Instead, motivation invests our perceptions with normative import; one's perception is simultaneous with the sense that one *ought* to perceive or act in some manner. Part of the essential difference between perceptions and imaginings is that perceptions are experienced as nonoptional: I not only perceive, but I experience that it is right so to perceive and would fault someone who perceived otherwise.[14] But I would hardly fault another's imaginings. This is because perceptions are motivated by the perceptual field. Suddenly, for example, the perceptual field requires me to see a shipwreck. I do not experience this new perception as a simple fact about my psychology—I do not disinterestedly acknowledge that I happen now to see a shipwreck where before I happened to see a bank of trees. Instead, I experience this perception as normative, as a requirement. Even, as in cases of optical illusions, when I must disregard the motivating force of a perception, I do not simply notice that my perception is in error: I find this situation troubling. Or imagine I am oscillating between two perceptions (e.g., the person or the mannequin). Here, too, as the one perception or the other gains weight for me, I don't indifferently note this weight as a matter of fact. Instead, it increasingly seems right to me to perceive the person or the mannequin. Only if the motives are indecisive do I experience my perception as merely optional, as normatively inert.

Now, in writing that motivation is normative, I do not so much mean that motivation *creates* normativity, as that it is a way of disclosing and responding to normativity. Just as we do not say that reasons *create* norms, but are normative insofar as they are ways of disclosing norms (they disclose how one should act given such and such considerations), and are responsive to norms (insofar as they dispose us to judge or decide in some manner), simi-

larly I mean that motivation is normative insofar as it is a way of disclosing and responding to norms.

One might wonder whether it is legitimate to speak of normativity short of reasoning. Or, if I insist on speaking of a sort of normativity short of reason, is this really just a subjective feeling of normativity? Such a conclusion would, in my view, fly in the face of the phenomena. Our lives are full of normativity that is neither merely subjective nor grounded in reason.[15] This is the sort of normativity at play, for example, in our perception of many practical situations: if I am playing tennis and the ball is rocketing toward me, I must decide with what stroke I should return the ball. I generally do not *reason* through the best way to hit the ball, but neither do I make the decision in a merely arbitrary and subjective manner. Instead, if I am an experienced player, my body is awake to the normative dimension of the court and keys me in to appropriate and inappropriate responses to the situation.[16] Similarly, when I see someone from a distance and cannot quite make them out, I have the sense that I should move closer so as to get a better look. I needn't *reason* that I should move closer, but this hardly entails that this sense is merely subjective: the ambiguity motivates the normative demand insofar as my body is awake to the normative quality of my view, namely, that I currently have a bad view. Yet again, I needn't reason from the hill interposed between me and the bell tower to the perception of distance. But neither is the perception of distance merely subjective. Instead, this perception is rooted in a bodily awareness of perceptual significance. Naturally, this awareness does not always correspond to the objective facts—motivation is fallible. But fallibility no more reduces motivation to the sphere of the subjective than it does reason, which is also capable of error.

A rationalist might respond here that while, in the above cases, I do not make my decision in virtue of explicit reasoning, that does not demonstrate that my decision is not guided by reason. This response depends on the idea that what I am calling motives could really be described as implicit reasons—an idea I will argue against in section 9. But I think we can already see how this response is flawed, by noting that the normative force exerted by motivation often conflicts with that exerted by reason, as occurs, for example, in cases of optical illusion. In such cases it seems clear that two distinct forms of normativity are in play.

Now, it is certainly true that not all motivation is normative.[17] For example, if I am imagining a new bookcase, this *imagination* may give rise to a *wish* for a new bookcase. There is nothing normative about this motivational

process. This seems most manifestly true in those cases that concern the relation between two events lacking objective purport (e.g., an imagination and a wish). But we can also imagine cases in which a motive and its *motivatum* need not both be merely subjective: a perception could give rise to a wish, or, conversely, a strong desire might delude us into having a false belief. However, it seems clear that there is such a difference between normative and non-normative processes of motivation, and this is, strictly speaking, all I wish to point out. *How* we distinguish the two is a further question, though one obviously difficult and of interest. Briefly (and while I don't wish to hinge much on this criterion), I think we can provisionally say that for a process of motivation to be normative, (a) it needs to be responsive to norms; and (b) its motive force must be exerted by a phenomenon that is not merely subjective. For example, if my belief is motivated by a desire, the motive force belongs solely to my subjective state. By contrast, the reflection in the eye that motivates the perception of liveliness is objective: the motive force is exerted on me by the appearance of the transcendent thing (though, of course, it can exert this force only in virtue of my perceptual capacities). Further, if a perception gives rise to a wish, the motive might itself be objective, but because the motivational process is not governed by norms, it is not normative. In contrast, my perception of liveliness is governed by a set of perceptual norms (veridicality, etc.). Now, certainly, I need to have a certain competence and be responsive to relevant norms in order to be awake to normative forces: for example, I need to be familiar with the perceptual significance of the reflection in the eye, and to have something like accuracy to the world as a perceptual norm (if I was concerned merely with sensations and not with the world itself, then I would be deaf to the motive force of the reflection). But this competence and this responsibility are not the source of normativity—they are simply my alertness to normativity.

Thus, not all motivation is normative, yet motivation is open to the normative force exerted by the world. The point is that prior to rationality we are already awake to the normative dimension of the world, and, moreover, we are *spontaneously* responsive to it. Perceptual competence is just the ability to read the normative significance of the perceptual field and to be responsive to this significance in achieving a stable perception: the interposition of the hill gives rise to my perception of distance, because my body is awake to the perceptual significance of different parts of the perceptual field to others, and responds appropriately to this significance in achieving the perception of distance. Of course, this competence is not infallible. Optical illusions occur

when my perceptual competence misreads the normative significance of the perceptual field. But, again, this no more cancels perception's sensitivity to norms than does reason's fallibility cancel its sensitivity.

It would be possible at this point to launch an investigation of those norms that govern perceptual motivation. Indeed, I have already suggested equilibrium and determinacy as such norms, and we could add veridicality, the attainment of a maximal grasp (the "*mellieur prise*") on the perceived object, et cetera. But this would be beside the point of the present investigation, and all we need to note here is that perceptual motivation is normative because it is awake to the demands made of the perceptual field by these norms. In other words, in the sphere of perception, *motivation names our spontaneous responsiveness to the normative significance of the perceptual field*. Norms, and our spontaneous responsiveness to them, populate various spheres of human activity, such as the practical and the epistemic. In the next chapters, we will be considering the ways in which we are awake to and spontaneously responsive to the normative significance of perception in the epistemic domain.

Two points of clarification should be made here, since the notion of normativity will be essential throughout the following. First, while it is common to speak of normative ends as themselves motives (e.g., we say that someone's motive for picking up litter was to protect the environment), in general, I prefer to distinguish between motives and norms or normative ends. No doubt, normative motives can operate only in virtue of normative ends, but motives are not therefore themselves norms. So, for example, it is only because I have things like stability, harmony, and determinacy as perceptual ends, that as I approach the mannequin, its immobility can serve as a motive for revising my perceptual interpretation. But it is the *immobility*, not the stability/harmony/determinacy, that is the motive—the latter are rather that in virtue of which the former can serve as a motive.[18] When I speak of motivation as norming (e.g., our judgments), this is not to say that motives are themselves norms, just that motivation is a norm-governed process, and consequently the outputs of motivation carry normative weight.

Second, in identifying things like determinacy, maximal grasp, et cetera as norms of perception, I don't mean to claim that the normativity at stake in perception—or in motivation in general—is reducible to a contribution made by the subject. My point is only that if perceptual motivation is a responsiveness to the "silent language perception speaks to us" (*PhP*, 50), then I must speak perception's language in order for it to solicit my response. In other words, I understand Merleau-Ponty to claim that the perceptual field

motivates a response only if we are attuned to that field's normative significance (i.e., only if we adopt certain norms). Again, if I didn't take harmony as a norm, for example, the immobility of the figure need not motivate a perception of a mannequin. In this sense, the contributions of both perceiver and perceived are inseparable from the normativity of perceptual motivation. When I speak of motivation as a responsiveness to normative forces in the following, then, my intention will never be to presuppose that this normativity is reducible to a contribution on the part of the subject.

8. THE OUTPUT OF MOTIVATION TRANSCENDS ITS INPUT

In writing that the output of motivation transcends its motives or input, I mean that the output is not in any sense contained in its motives; the meanings produced by motivation are not definable in terms of the motivating meanings.[19] Take the following example: if I am in a dark room and a point of light moves across the wall, my eyes will be motivated to follow it. It would be phenomenologically clumsy to claim that the light *compels* my eyes. My eyes are not drawn by the light as one draws a heavy weight by rope. At a particular moment (T_1), one gives the rope a tug, and the weight slides toward one, in the direction of the pull at T_1. Similarly, at a particular moment (T_1), the light motivates my attention, drawing my eyes. But unlike the weight, my eyes are not drawn in whatever direction they are pulled at T_1; my eyes are not pulled in the direction of the light's location at T_1, but to wherever the light may be when they can catch it (T_2). Certainly, my eyes are motivated at T_1. But they are unlike the weight, which is compelled by the event at T_1, because they are motivated to an event at T_2. In other words, the light does not drag me along behind it, but awakens within me an intention. Here, the output of motivation (pursuit of the light at T_2) is not contained in its input (the light at T_1), and in this way the process of motivation is ampliative or creative. In a certain sense, what Heidegger said of the call of conscience—that it comes from me, but from beyond me—is a species of a more general truth about motivation: it comes from the present, but from beyond the present.

I use the term "transcend" here in order to make explicit the connection between motivation and Merleau-Ponty's treatment of transcendence in the *Phenomenology*. Here, I am not referring to the way in which entities transcend consciousness, nor to anything like transcendental conditions for the possibility of experience, but rather to something like transcendence in

Heidegger's sense (i.e., to the fact that consciousness takes up its past in projecting a future). Merleau-Ponty writes: "Existence is indeterminate in itself because of its fundamental structure: insofar as existence is the very operation by which something that had no sense takes on sense, [for example,] by which something that only had a sexual sense adopts a more general signification, by which chance is transformed into reason, or in other words, insofar as existence is the taking up of a *de facto* situation. 'Transcendence' is the name we shall give to this movement by which existence takes up for itself and transforms a *de facto* situation" (*PhP*, 173). According to Merleau-Ponty, it is a fundamental property of existence (in the existentialist sense) to transform a given situation in taking it up and making sense of it. Thus, for example, Merleau-Ponty thinks that if El Greco's style of painting can be attributed to astigmatism, it is not simply a matter of saying that this style is caused or determined by the astigmatism—as if his paintings were a content of El Greco's condition—but rather of saying that El Greco's style is a way of taking up the condition in order to reveal something true and new about human existence (*SB*, 203). It is this same "movement" of existence that I am trying to capture in terms of motivation: a motive does not contain its *motivatum*, but rather the *motivatum* is a way of taking up and transforming the motive. This is what I mean when I write that a *motivatum* transcends its motive.

The same is true in terms of perceptual motivation. The interpretation "shipwreck" is not somehow hidden within the perceptual field that motivates it. Though, of course, the thing out there in the world is already a shipwreck, it would be a mistake to transpose this fact into consciousness. It is not a matter of attending to a perceptual sense "shipwreck" that is somehow already tacitly within perception (see *PhP*, 28–34). Instead, for perception, there is initially only the bank of trees and a building tension. "Shipwreck" emerges in this troubled scene as a spontaneous and creative resolution to the tensions within the perceptual field that broke apart the previous interpretation. "Shipwreck" cannot be defined simply in terms of this perceptual field, then, because the schema "shipwreck" must be brought to the field (or else spontaneously develop through it); if the subject lacks this schema, the givens may fail to reorganize themselves and so may remain in tension.[20]

One symptom of this fact is that motives need not ground their *motivata* with necessity, in the sense that one motive can motivate a variety of different *motivata*. Stein puts it well in writing, "One state of affairs can enter into quite different logical connections and, correspondingly, authorize a variety

of claims. But it defines a range of possibilities, and if the knowing subject departs from this range, it proceeds irrationally."[21] If motives did contain all the resources for their outputs, then they might plausibly ground their outputs with necessity (i.e., determine some particular output). In this sense, I think we can say that motivation is a creative process, such that its outputs are original with respect to its inputs, or that its outputs involve an element of risk.[22]

9. MOTIVES ARE NEITHER REASONS NOR CAUSES

We are now in a position to see why Merleau-Ponty claims that motivation subverts the dichotomy of reasons and causes (*PhP*, 50–51). As I explained in the introduction, in distinguishing between reason and causality, I intend something like McDowell's distinction between "the logical space of reasons" and "the logical space of nature." Sellars articulated the former as follows: "In characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says."[23] If I claim that *X* is a reason for *Y*, I am not invoking *X* to describe how *Y* came about, but claiming something like, as Scanlon puts it, that *X* is a consideration in favor of *Y*.[24] Or we might say here: if *X* is a reason for *Y*, then *X* serves to justify *Y*. In other words, relationships within the logical space of reasons are normative (it is *right* to conclude by reason of Socrates' humanity that he is mortal, and it would be wrong to conclude otherwise) and justificatory. McDowell defines the latter, the logical space of nature, as the logical space within which the natural sciences operate. Natural sciences *explain* rather than *justify*; knowing a cause helps to explain how an effect came about, but it would be a category mistake to take a cause as a warrant or justification for a belief. Socrates, for example, is not justified in sitting in the Athenian prison on his final day by his bones and sinews, but by a conception of the good and how to realize it. The logical space of nature is, in other words, lawful but not normative.

But Merleau-Ponty resists placing motivation in either of these logical spaces. Instead, motivation names a sui generis logical space.[25] In brief, motives should be distinguished from causes because the former operate through their meanings and are normative, and should be distinguished from reasons because they are spontaneous and need not be explicit.

Motives Are Not Causes

As I have argued in this chapter, motivational relationships operate through their meanings and are normative. But neither of these features pertains to causality. Motives have their effect in virtue of that *as* which they are (i.e., in virtue of their meaning and not just as things or events). As we saw, one index of this is that it makes a difference what terms one uses to describe a motive. Because causal relationships hold between objects and events, and not between meanings, they are indifferent to that *as which* they are described.

Further, causal relations cannot establish normativity; they can make it such that something is the case, but not that something ought to be the case. This is why causality *explains* rather than *justifies*. If, for example, I can offer a causal explanation for one of my beliefs, this does nothing to establish that belief as right or wrong. In contrast, motivational relations *do* establish normativity: when I am motivated to perceive the shipwreck, I believe that I am perceiving rightly and that my friend who yet sees a bank of trees is mistaken. Therefore, motivational relations are not causal.[26] This doesn't mean that there is no causal story to be told about goings-on in the brain that underpin processes of motivation. But this is as true of reasoning as it is of motivation, and so if one admits a distinction between reason and causality, there is no obstacle to doing the same for motivation.

Motives Are Not Reasons

On the other hand, motives can't be identified with reasons. The prima facie reason to think this is that motives often conflict with reasons, as in cases of optical illusion. In such cases, I have perceptual motives for a particular perceptual sense, even while I have reasons to reject this sense. But, of course, reasons can also conflict among themselves at times, so let us try to be more precise about the difference between reasons and motives.

In brief, motives differ from reasons because motivation is a spontaneous and implicit process. Start with the first of these points. When we reason, we are concerned actively to give and take reasons. In response to these reasons, we can actively revise previously held positions. For example, if I hold *X*, and I hold that *if X, then Y*, then I will conclude that *Y*. But if I later find very compelling reasons to reject *Y*, and have very strong reasons to think that *if X, then Y*, then I will be compelled to reject *X*. This active control over belief, or revisability, is, in my view, crucial to our idea of reasoning: when I reason, I am free to accept or reject conclusions in response to reasons.[27] But the same

is not true of motivation. Here cases of motives conflicting with reasons (e.g., optical illusions) are illuminating, since they make this difference particularly obvious. In the Müller-Lyer illusion, I have compelling reasons to think that the lines are equal. I can thus revise the conclusion I drew from perception, namely, that the lines differ in length, on the basis of new reasons.[28] But I *cannot* so revise my perception. Motivation is closed, or rather at most partially open, to the giving and taking of reasons. Thus, whereas reasons are active, motives are spontaneous. In this way, motives are not reasons.[29]

To be clear, my claim is *not* that motivational processes are *entirely* unrevisable or unresponsive to reason. Suppose, for example, that I am beholding the bank of trees before it resolves into a shipwreck. My friend points at the trees, saying, "Look! A shipwreck!" It may well happen that my visual field suddenly reconfigures itself such that I succeed in seeing the shipwreck. So, testimony, and other sorts of reasons, does at times influence our perception. And neither, perhaps, does illusion rupture perception and belief so decisively as I suggest. One might point out that Merleau-Ponty himself writes of the Müller-Lyer lines that they are not quite equal or unequal, but indeterminate (*PhP*, 6). We should acknowledge, then, that the very processes grounded by motivation are not entirely closed to revisability by belief or reason. But this is perfectly compatible with my point, which really just requires that motivational processes *are not entirely open to reason*. Even if I accept my friend's contention that we are beholding a shipwreck, it is still possible that I fail to perceive the shipwreck—I may be able to do no more than move closer, to invite, as it were, the new perception. Take Merleau-Ponty's example of perceiving a two-dimensional drawing of a cube: "Even if I *know* that it can be seen in two ways, the figure sometimes refuses to change structure, and my knowledge must wait for its intuitive realization. Here again it must be concluded that judging is not perceiving" (*PhP*, 36). The point is that even when I successfully petition my perception to conform itself to my knowledge, I do not simply revise it in the manner I revise my judgments. I must "wait" for intuitive realization, or am perhaps never granted it, as in cases of stubborn optical illusions. What this tells us is that the process undergirding the perceptual change is not simply at the disposal of active thinking. Or, in the Müller-Lyer illusion, even when I measure the lines and *know* that they are equal, which surely is the decisive reason, I do not succeed in *seeing* them as determinately equal, only as indeterminate. So, the most we can say of such processes is that they are *partially*, and not *fully*, within the space of reasons.

But insofar as they are not fully within the space of reasons, they must be at least partially in another space, namely, in this case, the space of motivation.

This consideration alone should suffice to distinguish between motives and reasons, but a second, namely, that motives can be implicit in a way that reasons cannot, may help to clarify the difference.[30] For example, I claimed above that we can't think of the reflection in the portrait subject's eye as a reason, because it doesn't figure explicitly in the thought process that leads to the perception of the portrait as lively. Of course, this argument depends on the further claims that (a) motives can be implicit; and (b) reasons cannot. I have argued the first of these claims above. But why should we endorse the second? Couldn't we think of the process that leads from the reflection in the eye to the perception of liveliness as a sort of implicit reasoning? Certainly, I won't find in my consciousness any syllogism by which I conclude the portrait should be perceived as lively. But why should the lack of explicit reasoning persuade us that the perception of liveliness isn't an operation of reason? McDowell and others have consistently maintained that reasons for belief or action can be implicit. Proponents of this position tend to point out that, while in the normal course of experience we do not make our reasons explicit to ourselves, when we turn to reflection, we find our reasons readily available. Thus, McDowell has claimed, for example, that while a chess master playing blitz chess isn't giving reasons for her moves while playing, she would be able to give rational explanations of her moves as soon as she is questioned about them. McDowell writes: "What matters is that the agent can answer the 'Why?' question straight off, without any need for reflection or investigation."[31] This phenomenon of the seamless ("straight off") transition to reflection might lead one to believe that unreflective action is already chock-full of justifications: How else could the chess master respond so readily? O'Conaill is similarly unimpressed with the claim that reasons emerge only in making the grounds of action explicit. He writes, "A process of explicit justification will involve *giving* reasons, but usually this process does not *create* reasons; rather the agent makes apparent reasons of which they were already aware. So from the fact that explicit reasons . . . do not feature in unreflective action, it does not follow that such action is not rational."[32] And there is truth in this claim: if the subject is asked why she perceived the portrait as lively—and is able to recognize the influence of the reflection in the eye on her perception—and so answers the question in these terms, she will not have created this reason, as if out of thin air; she will have expressed her ground.

But this way of putting things is misleading. The choice is not really between giving reasons already present in perception and creating reasons out of thin air. This choice presupposes that the act of attention, of making our grounds explicit, is neutral, and introduces no transformation in that to which attention attends. But often the transition to reflection does introduce transformations, such that the content of unreflective action *resists* being taken reflectively, as justification.[33]

This phenomenon may be easier to see in terms of the grounds of behavior. Take, for example, Mrs. Ramsey's perplexity, in *To the Lighthouse*, at what exactly she had wanted when she entered her study: "Of course, she said to herself, coming into the room, she had come here to get something she wanted. First she wanted to sit down in a particular chair under a particular lamp. But she wanted something more, though she did not know, could not think what it was that she wanted. . . . There is something I want—something I have come to get, and she fell deeper and deeper without quite knowing what it was, with her eyes closed."[34] Mrs. Ramsey's trouble is not in having forgotten what she came for, as if there were some precise object of want she simply overlooks, but in not *knowing* what she came for, in not being able to identify a determinate object of her want. Certainly, one can give reasons for her action—she wants love, she wants her husband to speak, or she wants to be saved from her melancholy—but ultimately it would be a mistake to think that there is *some thing* that she wants, that there is some already determinate reason she is struggling to make explicit. It would be truer to say that there is no determinate reason for her action, but only an amorphous desire that does not know how to name itself, the wish for the "something more." Whatever names we give to this wish ("she wants love," etc.) do not merely transpose the implicit to the explicit. Instead, these names are so many ways of determining this prior phenomenon. That is to say, the reasons we identify for her action are determinations or expressions of a motive that precedes those determinations, and by which the determinations are normed as more or less true.[35] *This* is why Mrs. Ramsey struggles to identify her desire: there are no readily available reasons for her action, only better or worse ways of crystallizing, or giving determinate form to, the indeterminate field of grounds. For Mrs. Ramsay, to *give* a reason for entering the study would mean not simply noting her desires but determining them (i.e., transforming them into the kinds of things that have standing in the space of reasons).

Merleau-Ponty writes that when I express my reasons, I "crystallize a collection of indefinite motives in an act of consciousness" (*PhP*, 309). Mark

Wrathall interprets this statement to mean that when one treats a motive as a reason, one "ends up focusing on some narrow subset of a rich and complex set of motives," thereby treating the motive as more "determinate and prominent" than it was.[36] My reason-giving is thus not only more narrow than my motives, leaving out some of the content of my motives, but also—as I have been suggesting—more determinate than my motives. When I give a reason, I introduce a precise ground of belief or action. But the grounds of our beliefs or actions are often diffuse and indeterminate. For example, when I try to express Mrs. Ramsay's motives for entering the study as a desire for her husband to speak, I abstract from her protean desire for "something more" a particular moment to which I give form, and that I now substitute for her whole motivational situation. Such an abstraction is not false, exactly, since it expresses something true about her motivational situation. But it would be false to identify this abstraction with the contents of her initial motivational situation.

One might object that reasons, too, can be indeterminate. For example, we could say that Mrs. Ramsay justifies her entrance when she says, "Of course, I came to get something I wanted." Here she *has* given a reason for her action, albeit an indeterminate one. And if reasons can be indeterminate, then we can admit that the reflective process, in determining the grounds of action, may indeed alter or overlook certain contents of these grounds, without thereby newly making these grounds into reasons. But I don't think this objection works. First, with this response Mrs. Ramsay would in fact have introduced a determinate ground of her action, namely, an indeterminate desire: the claim "I came to get something I wanted" is itself a determinate expression of an indeterminate ground. But further, if she really did act for an indeterminate reason, it's far from clear why Mrs. Ramsay would feel such perplexity. After all, her perplexity is a matter of answering the "Why?" question about her action. If her ground really were the indeterminate reason, then she would have found this explanation satisfactory. But, on the contrary, in supplying the indeterminate reason she finds nothing resolved and the "Why?" question unanswered. Could we say that her perplexity was simply a matter of determining her reason more precisely? But what exactly would this mean? It might mean that she is trying to introduce a new, greater determinacy into the grounds of her action. But in this case she is no longer trying to grasp her actual reason for action, but trying to construct a new, more determinate justifier for this action. On the other hand, it might mean that she is trying to identify the grounds she actually had more precisely. But in

this case we are back to the thought, *not* that she acted for an indeterminate reason, but that she acted for a determinate reason that she simply cannot uncover and is only *expressing* indeterminately.

Nor should we think that such cases are confined to rare moments of reflection on our deepest desires. Consider Taylor Carman's example of unease about a conversation: one may have a vague sense of unease about a conversation, leading one to judge that the conversation is not going well, without formulating or being in a position immediately to formulate judgments about why one thinks it is not going well. Carman concludes that "the content of skillful social intelligence *resists* abstraction and incorporation into purely rational configurations of inference, deliberation, and decision."[37] At least a great portion of our grounds resists (which, again, is not to say *refuses*) being taken as reasons. If we examine life itself, we will, I think, find our grounds variously distributed by degree between the spaces of reason and motivation.

My point, of course, is not to deny that at times the process of justification unfolds smoothly—I am just pointing out that it doesn't always. Often there is resistance in explicating an unreflective ground of action as a reason, and this phenomenon of resistance isn't always accidental, but can indicate that an essential transformation is taking place. In such cases, my explication will be searching and tentative: it can be better or worse (more or less true to my actual grounds), but it won't be obvious or final. When this happens, the reasons I give might be perfectly good reasons, but *as descriptions of the reasons I had*, they are at best *expressions* of my motives and at worst *rationalizations* of my judgment or action.[38] In brief, the fact that a motive can be made into a reason no more makes it a reason than the fact that a bar of metal can be melted means that the bar is a liquid. Of course, it is not an extrinsic fact about motives that they can be taken up as reasons; it is because motivation is governed by norms, a relation between meanings, et cetera—in other words, because of the essential features it shares with reason—that motivation can be taken up as a reason. But these features do not suffice to identify motives with reasons. Consequently, the fact that we can take our motives as reasons does not show that our motives are reasons, or that reasons can be implicit.

It is worth noting that by distinguishing between motives and reasons, Merleau-Ponty is to some extent diverging from his phenomenological predecessors, like Husserl and Stein. Merleau-Ponty clearly distinguishes motivation from reason (*PhP*, 48–50), but Husserl and Stein distinguish between rational and irrational motives. Stein and Husserl often write of "rational motivation."[39] Husserl will even speak of reason as a preeminent case of

motivation.[40] It would seem, then, that Merleau-Ponty appropriates this phenomenological conception of motivation in a unique manner. What makes Merleau-Ponty's appropriation unique, I think, is his description of motivation in terms of the spontaneous grounding exerted by the body. Motivation in this sense, even when it agrees with the demands of reason, should not be assimilated to reason, for reason belongs in the domain of our active mental control: we actively give and take reasons, and we can revise our beliefs in light of them. We could, perhaps, speak of rational and irrational motives in this sense, but this would signify only that some motives agree with a standard external to them, that of reason, while others do not.

On the other hand, while my primary purpose in this section has been to insist on the difference between motives and reasons, I think we should be careful not to overemphasize the break between the two. Merleau-Ponty's general claim, which we will consider in the following chapters, is that the domain of knowledge, and the space of reasons in general, takes up and continues (even while transcending) the normativity inherent to motivation. In other words, Merleau-Ponty's project is never to destroy the rational, but to root it in perceptual experience, and in motivation.

While there is undoubtedly more to say about motivation, let the foregoing suffice as an explanation of Merleau-Ponty's account of the phenomenon. We have seen that perceptual experience presents us with a spontaneous sense that is not well accounted for in terms of reason or causality. Instead, we needed to describe a novel form of grounding—motivation—in order to understand how perception comes about. In brief, for Merleau-Ponty, motivation is the type of grounding characteristic of our bodily spontaneity, in its awareness of the meaningful and normative dimensions of experience. As such, motivation is irreducible to other familiar forms of grounding, namely, physical causality and reasoning.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRIMACY OF PERCEPTION

The contention of this book isn't just that motivation is a form of grounding, or is the grounding pertinent to perception, but that it is an *epistemic* ground, and the one pertinent to the relation between perception and knowledge. Indeed, my position is that motivation allows us to get into view Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception, the claim that all knowledge is founded in perception. The present chapter is meant to define these claims. First, I explain what it means to take motivation as an epistemic ground. Then I offer an exposition of the "primacy of perception" thesis and explain how it can be interpreted in light of motivation. Finally, I provide a definition of knowledge that accommodates this account of epistemic ground.

PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE

If the claim of this chapter is that knowledge is founded on perception, we first need an account of what perception and knowledge are and how they differ.[1] Despite Merleau-Ponty's central interest in the difference between the two, he is not overly concerned with providing fixed definitions for these terms (such definitions would no doubt conflict with his method of gradually refining concepts over the course of an investigation). At times, he even seems to undermine this distinction, speaking of perception as a kind of knowledge, for example, claiming that "perception is an *originary* knowledge" (*PhP*, 45). Moreover, part of Merleau-Ponty's point about knowledge is that it cannot be so rigorously distinguished from perception as the philosophical tradition has attempted to do—a move that considerably complicates his description of the difference. Nevertheless, he clearly thinks there is a difference between the two and distinguishes them along a number of lines.[2]

As a starting point, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, knowledge is composed of judgments, and judgments are propositional (their contents are propositions) and thetic (they are actively affirmed or denied). Consider Merleau-Ponty's contrast between perception and critical thought: "Critical thought encounters only *bare propositions* which it discusses, accepts or rejects. Critical thought has broken with the naïve evidence of *things*, and when it affirms, it is because it no longer finds any means of denial. . . . It is not aware of our contact with the perceived world which is simply there before us, beneath the level of the verified true and the false" (*PrP*, 3). We can isolate three claims here: (1) critical thought is propositional; (2) critical thought accepts or rejects (is thetic); and (3) critical thought takes place at the level of verification, or as we might also say, it belongs in the logical space of reasons. Each of these is a claim that Merleau-Ponty will make of knowledge more generally.[3]

First, perception differs from knowledge in its content; the content of the latter is propositional, whereas that of the former is not.[4] This is not to say that perceptual experience is merely of sense data, or has merely "thin" properties as its contents. On the contrary, for Merleau-Ponty, perception is of things: I perceive the rose, for example, and not a red patch.[5] Of course, to perceive a thing is not to be presented with a bare object (i.e., a unity without any particular character). Rather, we always perceive an object *as something* (e.g., I perceive this as a rose; that as a lily). In the terms developed in chapter 1, perception has a *sense* or meaning, albeit not a linguistic one. Very provisionally, then we can say that the contents of an act of perception include a reference to an object and a meaning under which that object is intended.

But whereas the direct objects of perception are meaningful things, the direct objects of knowledge are states of affairs; I perceive things, but I know states of affairs. For example, I see the snowcapped mountain, but I know *that* the mountain is capped with snow. Correlatively, the contents of knowings are propositional. Of course, there are a number of ways of defining propositional content, and I don't want to get bogged down in any particular definition. So, provisionally, we might say something like the following: contents are propositional if they include not just a reference to an object, but a complex of references or meanings structured in a predicative manner (e.g., "The mountain is capped with snow" structures the meanings "mountain" and "capped with snow" in a predicative relation). The contents of knowledge do seem to be propositional in this sense, while the contents of perception do not. Of course, to say that knowledge "contains" propositions

is compatible with saying that knowledge is *about* the world, not *about* propositions. The point is just that we know the world through or in propositions. The same cannot, in Merleau-Ponty's view, be said of perception.[6]

Of course, this last point is not uncontroversial. So, why does Merleau-Ponty think perceptual content is nonpropositional? There are a number of reasons why one might endorse this claim,[7] but I take it that Merleau-Ponty's reasons have to do with the sorts of phenomenological considerations Husserl appealed to in distinguishing experience from judgment. Basically, Husserl argues that whereas experience is "single-rayed" (i.e., it intends its object simply), predication is multirayed, distinguishing and connecting a subject with a predicate.[8] Obviously, any proposition will have to be multirayed in this sense, since it synthesizes distinct contents. But while experience presents us with objects rich in sense, it does not distinguish and synthesize an object and its properties. I see the blue rug, and it is not as if perception presents me with the rug but not with the blue. But perception does not distinguish the blue out from the rug and predicate the former of the latter: only propositions do this. Or, we could reach the same conclusion in terms of the phenomenological distinction between intuitive and empty acts, that is, between acts in which we are actually presented (e.g., perceptually) with the object of that act and those in which we merely mean or intend that object. Much as Hopp argues of conceptual contents, propositional contents are always "detachable" in the sense that any propositional content can serve as the content of an act that does not present its object (e.g., any propositional content could serve as the content of an empty belief).[9] But perception is intuitive: it presents its object. So, there is a clear sense in which the phenomenological structure of perception differs from acts that have propositional content.[10] Certainly, to at least a considerable extent, the content of any perception can be described in propositions. But as Crane points out, this hardly entails that that content is itself propositional.[11]

Second, knowledge is thetic, by which I mean that at the level of knowledge, we do not simply entertain contents, but affirm or deny them. This is to say that when we have knowledge, we have actively taken a stance with respect to propositions. As I suggested above, for Merleau-Ponty, this claim is wrapped up in the idea that knowledge is composed of judgments, since in judgments we actively affirm or deny some proposition. If I judge that "the mountain is capped with snow," I affirm "capped with snow" of the mountain. In contrast, according to Merleau-Ponty, perception does not actively affirm or deny its contents. It is not that perception, unlike judgment, simply

entertains some content: indeed, as I'll argue in chapter 5, the fundamental attitude of perception toward its content is a kind of credence. But this credence is not an affirmation, since affirmation is active, whereas this credence is spontaneous. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "Between sensing and judging, ordinary experience draws a very clear distinction. It understands judgment to be a position-taking. . . . It takes sensing, on the contrary, to be the giving of oneself over to the appearance without seeking to possess it or know its truth" (*PhP*, 36). In perception, we give ourselves over to what we perceive, rather than verify it. Thus, we are active with respect to knowledge in a way that we are not with perception.

Third, knowledge belongs within the space of reasons. For now, all I mean by this is that at the level of knowledge, we judge—actively affirm or deny—propositions in response to reasons. As Merleau-Ponty puts it above, critical thought belongs at the level of "verified truth" (i.e., it affirms only when it is no longer capable of denying). In other words, I know a proposition when I am justified in affirming it (i.e., when I have sufficient reason to affirm it). As should be already clear, perception doesn't work this way. Perception occurs beneath the level of the "verified true"; I do not need to verify the existence of something in order to perceive it. Or, as we saw in the last chapter, perception, grounded by motivational processes, does not belong to the space of reasons.

But we should be careful here, for while Merleau-Ponty thinks that knowledge belongs within the space of reasons, he does not think that for something to count as knowledge it must actually be grounded *solely* in reasons. Indeed, he thinks we have no beliefs so grounded. He writes, for example, that we cannot "ever fully lay out before ourselves the reasons for any affirmation," and every item of knowledge includes in its ground at least some component, not of reason, but of motivation (*PhP*, 415). As we will see, then, for Merleau-Ponty, the space of reasons is wholly contained within the space of motivation, in the sense that anything within the space of reasons is also in the space of motivation. This is not, of course, to say that reasons are just motives—they aren't, as we saw in chapter 1—just that there is nothing in the space of reasons that isn't also in the space of motives. Thus, in saying that knowledge belongs to the space of reasons, I just mean that it is *responsive* to reasons (in the sense that I can revise any piece of knowledge in light of reasons), and that knowledge has verification (i.e., being actually grounded in sufficient reasons) as a norm or regulative ideal.

As a corollary to this point, we could note that knowledge has a different relation to certainty than does perception. Knowledge seeks a greater degree

of certainty (provided by justification) than that found in perception. Again, this is not to say that any item of knowledge does in fact attain certainty—Merleau-Ponty argues that none do (*PhP*, 420)—only that certainty figures as a norm for knowledge in a way that it doesn't for perception.

Here we should note a fourth difference between knowledge and perception, which is probably the difference most frequently pointed to by Merleau-Ponty, namely, that the contents of knowledge (what I will call "intellectual contents") are universal or ideal in a way that perceptual contents are not. Merleau-Ponty writes that knowledge is the field in which "the mind seeks to possess the truth, to define its objects itself, and thus to attain to a universal wisdom, not tied to the particularities of our situation" (*PrP*, 6). For something to count as knowledge, then, it must in principle be something to which all could agree. Certainly, perception for Merleau-Ponty is intersubjective, insofar as the perceptual world is a shared world, but it is not universal in the same way knowledge is.[12] In part, this is because perception is necessarily perspectival in a way that knowledge isn't: according to Merleau-Ponty, the hidden sides of a cube are perceptually present to me in a manner different from my knowledge that a cube has six sides (*PrP*, 14). But more importantly, this is because Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between perceptual unity and "ideal unity": according to Merleau-Ponty, intellectual meanings have a kind of unity over time and space that perceptual meanings lack. That is, judgments or propositions (as well as the concepts that compose them) have a special kind of unity over their tokens. The important theme here is that the contents of knowledge are ideal meanings, or essences, whereas the contents of perception are particular things. Even when knowledge is about particular empirical objects—such as in the case of judgments about perception—it makes use of ideal meanings. For example, when I judge, "The tree is shedding leaves," the meaning contents of this proposition are ideal: "tree" and "shedding" are used to describe *this* particular tree, but have universal meanings, that is, meanings irreducible to this particular tree.

Here, too, we must note that Merleau-Ponty does not so much think that the intellectual meanings employed in knowledge are, in the final analysis, universal exactly. In fact, he argues that our ideas are always situated in lived contexts, such that they never attain full universality or ideality (see, e.g., *VI*, 108–19). Nevertheless, the kinds of meanings operative in knowledge have a unity, according to Merleau-Ponty, that perceptual meanings do not, even if the difference between them is not so strict as it might at first appear.[13]

While I take these to be the definitive differences between knowledge and perception, Merleau-Ponty suggests a number of respects in which knowledge differs from perception in its degree. First, he argues that knowledge is more explicit than perception; part of knowledge's function is to render explicit the structures implicit in perception.[14] This is a difference only in degree, since perception is not wholly implicit. But one of knowledge's aims is to raise implicit structures to explicitation, and in this sense we might say that knowledge is more explicit than perception. Second, knowledge is more determinate than perception: part of knowledge's function is to fix or render more determinate the relatively ambiguous structures present in perception.[15] Here, too, perceptual meanings are not wholly indeterminate, and, conversely, as any philosopher could tell you, intellectual meanings are not wholly determinate. Nevertheless, knowledge takes the determination of meanings as a goal, and renders perceptual meanings more determinate. Third, knowledge aims to coordinate and unify perceptual content.[16] Perception, too, of course, is characterized by unity—perception always takes place within a perceptual *world*, such that one perception is not indifferent to another, but seeks to cohere with it. But knowledge aims at a strict unity and coherence that perception often fails to attain and has capacities that allow it to unify perceptual meanings in a manner that perception itself cannot.[17]

Now, it might well be the case that there are a number of other states one could be in that we might want to call knowledge. For example, we might think of something like "know-how" as knowledge. One might object that such know-how need not be propositional, in which case my definition of knowledge is too narrow. There may indeed be good reasons to think of such cases as knowledge, and Merleau-Ponty himself seems to suggest as much, for example, in speaking of habit (e.g., fluency in using a typewriter) as "a knowledge in our hands [*un savoir qui est dans les mains*]" (*PhP*, 145). Still, I take it that when he speaks of knowledge, Merleau-Ponty is often interested in a particular type of knowledge, knowledge in the sense of "the intellect," which is propositional and thetic. For example, just prior to the above quote, Merleau-Ponty claims that habit is precisely *not* a form of knowledge (*connaisance*). In my view, then, Merleau-Ponty wishes to distinguish between knowledge in the sense of the intellect and other cases of what we might want to call knowledge. If one prefers, we could think of what I will here call knowledge as something like "knowledge in the strict sense," which could be contrasted with knowledge more generally.

Let this suffice as a provisional differentiation of perception and knowledge. Other than where necessary to distinguish knowledge from perception, I have left this account of knowledge relatively broad (e.g., not yet differentiating between internalist and externalist conceptions of knowledge). This is in part because Merleau-Ponty's account of knowledge often does not fit comfortably within the terms of contemporary epistemology, and in part because I wish to leave my arguments available to a relatively broad audience. That said, we will have occasion to offer further specification of Merleau-Ponty's account of knowledge at certain points in the following.

THE PRIMACY OF PERCEPTION

Let us now turn to the claim we are trying to understand: Merleau-Ponty's "Primacy of Perception" thesis. This thesis is a claim about the relation between perception and knowledge, according to which, perception has "primacy" in relation to knowledge in the sense that knowledge is founded on perception. Merleau-Ponty writes, for example, that "the certainty of ideas is not the foundation of the certainty of perception but is, rather, based on it" (*PrP*, 13).

But what does it mean to say that knowledge is founded on perception? First, note that the concept of foundation invoked to describe this relation is a technical phenomenological term. Husserl defines foundation, *Fundierung*, as follows: "If a law of essence means that an *A* cannot as such exist except in a more comprehensive unity which connects it with an M, we say that an *A as such requires foundation by an M* or also that *an A as such requires to be supplemented by an M*."[18] To say that knowledge is founded on perception means, in this sense, that knowledge is a *dependent* moment (i.e., that it is not self-subsisting, but instead requires "supplementation" by perception). This supplementation, of course, need not be simultaneous with the supplemented; the implication is not that any item of knowledge needs a correspondent item of perception temporally simultaneous with it in order to exist. One characteristic of knowledge is that an item of knowledge can endure beyond the perception that founds it. The implication is only that any item of knowledge, in order to be knowledge, requires an appropriately correspondent item of perception, whether present or retained.

Merleau-Ponty undoubtedly relies on Husserl's definition of *Fundierung* in conceiving the relation between perception and knowledge, but gives the term a more specific sense when he defines it as a relationship in which "the founding

term . . . is primary in the sense that the founded term is presented as a determination or a making explicit of the founding term, which prevents the founded term from ever fully absorbing the founding term; and yet . . . the founded is not merely derived from [the founding], since it is only through the founded that the founding appears" (*PhP*, 414). Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, a *Fundierung* relation is a two-way relation, in which the founded is dependent on the founding, insofar as the founding is that for which the founded exists, and, conversely, the founding is not indifferent to what it founds, but is determined, explicated, and in this sense brought to appearance by the founded. The founding term has *primacy* insofar as it is that which the founded determines and explicates. But the founded is not merely "derived from" the founding, since it is the founded that makes the founding appear explicitly and determinately.[19]

We can understand the *primacy* of perception, then, to mean that knowledge is dependent on perception insofar as knowledge is an explication and determination of perceptual experience. At the same time, though, the primacy of perception entails that knowledge transcends perception, because it affects perception with a standard of determinacy that perception alone could not attain. And, indeed, this is precisely how Merleau-Ponty defines the relation between perception and knowledge: "The perceived object . . . has a two-fold relation to what is understood. On the one hand, it is only the sketch or fragment of meaning which calls for a repetition [in the understanding] that fixes the perceived object and finally makes it *exist*. On the other, the perceived object is the prototype of meaning and alone accomplishes the actual truth of what is understood" (*PrW*, 106).

More exactly, as I will explain in chapter 4, Merleau-Ponty thinks knowledge is dependent on perception in two respects: with respect to its meaning and with respect to its evidence. Thus we can say, first, that knowledge is dependent on perception because intellectual meanings are determinations and explications of perceptual meanings; and second, knowledge is dependent on perception because intellectual evidence, or intellectual truth, is dependent on perceptual evidence, or perceptual truth.

But, again, the dependency of knowledge on perception does not entail that knowledge is reducible to, or a content of, perception. In determining and explicating perception, knowledge recaptures perceptual meanings and evidence at a distinct level. As specified in the section above titled "Perception and Knowledge," knowledge is characterized by a set of properties that cannot be attributed to perception, and thus while knowledge may be dependent on perception, it transcends the latter in a variety of respects. Merleau-Ponty insists that

> In speaking of the primacy of perception, I have never, of course, meant to say (this would be a return to the theses of empiricism) that science, reflection, and philosophy are only transformed sensations or that values are deferred and calculated pleasures. By these words, the "primacy of perception," we mean that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us; that perception is a nascent *logos*; that it teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true conditions of objectivity itself; that it summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action. It is not a question of reducing human knowledge to sensation, but of assisting at the birth of this knowledge, to make it as sensible as the sensible, to recover the consciousness of rationality. This experience of rationality is lost when we take it for granted as self-evident. (*PrP*, 25)

The same considerations that apply to the dependency of meanings apply to the dependency of evidence. Merleau-Ponty writes, "We are not reducing mathematical evidence to perceptual evidence. We are certainly not denying, as will be seen, the originality of the order of knowledge vis-a-vis the perceptual order. We are trying only to loose the intentional web which ties them to one another, to rediscover the paths of the sublimation which preserves and transforms the perceived world into the spoken world" (*PrW*, 123–24). Or, he writes that intelligible being "has its own evidence" (*IP*, 12).

The aim of the "primacy of perception," then, is not to explain rationality or knowledge in purely naturalistic terms (of course, perception itself would be misunderstood in such terms for Merleau-Ponty, depending on what we mean by "naturalism"), but only to elucidate the deep connection between perception and knowledge. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "The perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. This thesis does not destroy either rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth" (*PrP*, 13). Or again, "There is thus no destruction of the absolute or of rationality here, only of the absolute and the rationality separated from existence" (*PrP*, 27).[20]

MOTIVATION AS THE KEY TO THIS THESIS

My central interpretative claim in this book is that we should read the thesis of the primacy of perception in terms of Merleau-Ponty's concept of

motivation. What we are trying to understand is the claim that perception founds knowledge. But, as I will argue in the following chapters, perception cannot cause or be a reason for our knowledge. If this is true, we can understand the sort of grounding with which perception furnishes knowledge only in terms of motivation.

It must be noted that reading Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception in terms of motivation is not standard. Merleau-Ponty does little to connect these two concepts, and so there is a real interpretative question here. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the relation between perception and knowledge support my reading. Consider the following two passages:

> 1. "We call this level of experience [namely, perception] 'primordial'—not to assert that everything else derives from it by transformations and evolution (we have expressly said that man perceives in a way different from any animal) but rather that it reveals to us the permanent data of the problem which culture attempts to resolve" (*PrP*, 25).

> 2. As we saw above, Merleau-Ponty writes that the perceived object is a "sketch or fragment of meaning which calls for a repetition [in the understanding] that fixes the perceived object and finally makes it *exist*" (*PrW*, 106).

Perception poses the "problem" to which knowledge responds; it *calls for* knowledge. This is the language of solicitation or motivation. More, the idea expressed by this language is that perception *norms* our knowledge without containing it, which of course is precisely the sort of grounding I attributed to motivation in chapter 1.

Further, we might rephrase the above claim that perception is that which is to be explicated and determined by knowledge as follows: perception is the *motif* of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty consistently thinks these two senses of the French word *motif*—motive and motif—together, and this seems to be just the way he thinks about the relation between perception and knowledge in a third passage:

> 3. "The object only gives rise to the 'knowing event' that will transform it through the still ambiguous sense that it offers to attention as needing-to-be-determined, such that the object is the 'motive' [*motif*] of and not the cause of the event" (*PhP*, 33).

The perceived object is the *motif*, rather than the rational warrant or the natural cause, of the "knowing event," the act of explicit determination.

So, it seems to me that my reading has initial plausibility on the basis of a number of passages. Nevertheless, the primary support for this reading will derive from its ability to describe the primacy of perception throughout this book. If this hypothesis has some merit, then we should now begin to test it.

MOTIVATION AS GROUNDING KNOWLEDGE

The following chapters will do the work of explaining in detail how motivation can describe the way in which perception grounds knowledge.[21] But a few introductory comments can be made at this point. For simplicity of presentation, I'll do this is in terms of the nine claims made about motivation in chapter 1. We can reframe each of these claims in terms of the relation between perception and knowledge. For now, I will not argue for these claims, only introduce them—the argumentative work will come in chapters 3 and 4.

1. Perception grounds knowledge spontaneously.

The grounding relation between perception and knowledge is not a fully active one. Just as perception is stubborn (i.e., resists our active control), so, too, does its epistemic contribution have a sort of autonomy. Thus, the disposition to make certain judgments provided by perception is not responsible to deliberation: even if I know my perception to be false, perception still inclines me to form certain judgments and gives weight to some beliefs and not others. The relation between perception and knowledge—though it can be superseded by reasoning (for, as I have said above, knowledge belongs in the space of reasons)—is not itself an active exercise of reason-giving.

2. We need not be explicitly aware of the grounding relation between perception and knowledge for it to operate.

Perception grounds knowledge whether or not we explicitly attend to it and its grounding force. We often know on the basis of our perceptions without having explicitly considered that perception is the basis for this knowledge. My considerations do not run, for example, as follows: I hear the kettle; my hearing is a reliable basis for knowledge, therefore, I know that the water is ready. But, more generally, Merleau-Ponty argues that the structures of knowledge depend on those of perception in ways of which knowledge is almost

entirely unaware. He writes, "Every consciousness is, to some extent, perceptual consciousness. Were it possible to unfold at each moment all of the presuppositions in what I call my 'reason' or my 'ideas,' then I would always be discovering experiences that have not been made explicit" (*PhP*, 416).

3. Perception grounds knowledge in virtue of its meaning.

As we have seen, for Merleau-Ponty, it is not the case that meaning first gets into human affairs at the propositional level; instead, the perceptual world is already rich in meaning. More, these two levels of meaning are not indifferent to each other. When a perception gives rise to a proposition, it does not do so at random. Rather, it is a perceptual *meaning* that determines a field of possible propositional meanings. For example, if in response to perceiving a fir tree, I judge, "That's a fir tree," it is not simply my perception of "that" that grounds the judgment, but my perception of the fir tree *as a fir tree*. Consider that if I lacked the ability to recognize the perceptual meaning of a fir tree, then my perception could not ground the correspondent judgment.

4. This grounding relation is internal.

In other words, the relation between perception and knowledge is such that the meaning of each depends on the other. There is no question here, then, of perception being a mere occasion for me to make certain judgments. Rather, the very meaning of my judgments depends on that of my perceptions.

5. This grounding relation is a reciprocal or two-way relation.

Merleau-Ponty expressed this point with the quote from *The Prose of the World* considered above—namely, that the perceived thing is a "sketch or fragment of meaning which calls for a repetition [in the understanding] that fixes the perceived object and finally makes it *exist*" (106). According to Merleau-Ponty, perception provides the prototype of meaning on which intellectual meanings depend. Conversely, intellectual meanings fix and determine perceptual meanings.

6. The move from perception to knowledge tends to equilibrium.

Part of what it means to say that intellectual meanings fix and determine perceptual meanings is that they resolve tensions implicit in perceptual meanings and yield a more stable account of the perceptual world. Much as in Plato's description of thought-summoners,[22] perception is unstable: it lacks the resources to resolve the contradictions it engenders. Such contradictions

must be resolved by transition to a higher level (i.e., the more determinate system of structures that knowledge provides). For example, children tend to have an undifferentiated concept of air and nothing (they fail to distinguish between the two).[23] This is because air "looks" empty (i.e., there is not an unambiguous perceptual distinction between air and nothing). Nothing is stranger to the sighted child than to imagine air as full, as suddenly becoming itself visible, for how, then, could one see? The child imagines one would be immersed in an impenetrable cloud, and, further, traversing space would present the same difficulty as traversing water. But this undifferentiated concept of air/nothing results in contradictions with the other beliefs that children hold, for example, that they can feel air move across their skin (wind) and fill or empty their lungs (breath). The child is led to these difficulties because she draws a strict distinction between the "full" (substance) and the "empty" (nothing). The child's education must teach her that this distinction is not final, since "full" solids and "empty" air are both states of matter. This resolves the contradictions faced by the child's beliefs: if air is not nothing, then it makes sense that it moves and that it enters, fills, and nourishes the lungs. Here we can see knowledge resolve the contradiction present in perception by transition to a new and more determinate level (a conceptual system that can distinguish between air and nothing), resulting in a greater degree of stability.

7. This grounding relation is normative.

Any given perception can be propositionally determined in innumerable manners. Nevertheless, though perception does not itself contain any of these propositional responses to it, it norms the field of such responses. Perception determines some propositional responses as legitimate and others as illegitimate. When I see a scrawny fir tree, I can judge, "That's a fir tree" or "That's a scrawny tree," et cetera, but not "That's an oak" or, presumably, "That tree is mighty." Not only does perception rule out certain propositions, it norms the set of propositions it allows, establishing some as truer to the perceptual experience, more expressive of it, than others.

8. Knowledge transcends perception.

Since knowledge has a kind and determinacy of content not found in perception, we must say that knowledge transcends perception. In other words, the content of knowledge is not reducible to that of perception: there is no way of specifying intellectual contents purely in terms of perceptual con-

tents. Indeed, myriad propositions could be supported by any perception. To use an example of Husserl's, if I see a blackbird flying, I can express this perception in all manner of judgments: "That is black!"; "That is a black bird!"; "There flies the black bird!"; "There it soars!"[24] There is no one-to-one mapping between perception and propositional knowledge, and no particular proposition is needed to express my current perception. The same is only more true if we look to a more complex case, such as the air/nothing example. Here the set of intellectual meanings does not map in any obvious way onto perceptual meanings, which appear too ambiguous (simultaneously presenting air and nothing) to translate into the intellectual level. Thus, there is no way of specifying our knowledge in purely perceptual terms. We must say, then, that knowledge transcends the very perception that norms it.

9. The relation between perception and knowledge is neither one of reason nor one of causality.

Our perceptions do not give us reasons to make judgments. Instead, the bond between perception and knowledge precedes reason. Merleau-Ponty writes, "There are truths just as there are perceptions: not that we could ever fully lay out before ourselves the reasons for any affirmation—there are only motives. . . . Every consciousness is, to some extent, perceptual consciousness. Were it possible to unfold at each moment all of the presuppositions in what I call my 'reason' or my 'ideas,' then I would always be discovering experiences that have not been made explicit" (*PhP*, 415–16). Our knowledge is thus not fully grounded on reasons. On the other hand, neither does perception cause our judgments; perception does not simply bring about judgments while we passively observe, for this relation is normative. Instead, perceptions call for or motivate our beliefs.

In a manner that we will have to comprehend in the following chapters, this means that the relation between perception and knowledge subverts the traditional dichotomy between justification and explanation. Our beliefs are not justified by our perception, and the project of justifying beliefs is subsequent to the formation of these beliefs through perception. This does not mean that perception simply explains our beliefs. The relation between the two is not a neutral matter of fact, but concerns how we ought to believe; it belongs to a normative space, but a space that is nevertheless spontaneous, and gives rise to knowledge prior to our considered, deliberate, and active reason-giving.

A NEW DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE

We can now provide a preliminary discussion of the consequences of these claims. The account I have just provided requires us to redefine the very terms in which knowledge has traditionally been understood. If it is true that our knowledge is, at a fundamental level, motivated and not justified by perception, then Merleau-Ponty cannot be offering a justified true-belief account of knowledge. Knowledge comes into being prior to justification, and our knowledge, according to Merleau-Ponty, is never entirely grounded in justification. Instead, perception grounds beliefs in a normative manner, and this normativity can suffice for knowledge.

This account thus accepts a more general definition of knowledge than the traditional justified true-belief account, which we might call a "normatively motivated judgment" definition. On such an account, a belief counts as knowledge, just in case it is a normatively motivated judgment. As we noted in chapter 1, not all motivation is normative, and so not all kinds of motivation suffice to ground knowledge. If, for example, I am motivated to form a judgment by a desire, then that motivation is not appropriate to constitute that judgment as knowledge. Further, not any kind of normatively motivated state can count as knowledge. Perception, as I argued in chapter 1, is normatively motivated, but it is not knowledge; as we'll see in chapter 5, our spontaneous faith in the perceived world is normatively motivated, but is not therefore knowledge. The difference between these states and knowledge is that knowledge consists of judgments: the appropriately motivated state must be a judgment (i.e., must be propositional and actively affirmed) to count as knowledge.

As I argued in chapter 1, the normativity at stake here should not be reduced to a subjective feeling, any more than perception itself is a simple feeling. Instead, motivation amounts to a spontaneous sensitivity to normative forces. There are normative forces at play in various domains of human life, such as the perceptual, the practical, and the epistemic. As we have seen, motivation is our spontaneous alertness and responsiveness to such forces. With regard to the epistemic relation between perception and knowledge, we can describe a number of such norms, to include: accuracy (judgments ought accurately to express perception); expressivity (judgments ought to capture as much of perception as possible); stability or fixity (knowledge should provide a fixed or stable account of the perceptual world); determinacy (knowledge should render the perceptual world more determinate); and unity (knowledge should offer a harmonious and unitary account of the perceptual world).[25]

In general, according to Merleau-Ponty, these normative dimensions pick up and continue the normative dimensions operative in perception beyond perception's capabilities. Merleau-Ponty writes,

> Science and philosophy have for centuries been carried along by the originary faith of perception. Perception opens onto things. This means that perception is oriented—as if toward its own end—toward a *truth in itself* in which the reason for all appearances is found. Perception's silent thesis is that experience, at each moment, can be coordinated with the experience of the preceding moment and with that of the following one, that my perspective can be coordinated with the perspectives of other consciousnesses—that all contradictions can be removed, that monadic and intersubjective experience is a single continuous text—and that what is indeterminate for me at this moment could become determinate for a more complete knowledge, which is seemingly realized in advance in the thing, or rather which is the thing itself. At first, science had been nothing but the continuation or the amplification of the movement that is constitutive of perceived things. (*PhP*, 54)

Norms such as stability, determinacy, and unity, which define the project of knowledge, are also characteristic of our perceptual motivation. In Merleau-Ponty's view, the norms of knowledge may exceed those of perception in certain respects, and yet they are fundamentally continuous with them, for knowledge, like perception, aims at the world itself. For a belief to count as knowledge, in this sense, it must be a judgment motivated by alertness to the relevant normative forces.

I would also suggest that this account of knowledge should include a truth constraint. I take it that knowledge, for Merleau-Ponty, like perception, is factive (i.e., I can only know that *p*, if *p*). I do not think Merleau-Ponty directly claims as much about knowledge, but he does write of perception that it is "just that kind of act where there can be no question of separating the act itself and the term upon which it bears" (*PhP*, 393). I would suggest the same is true of knowledge—after all, Merleau-Ponty's point in "The Cogito" chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception* is that our knowledge is no more transparent to us than our perception.[26]

Putting these pieces together, we can suggest the following definition of knowledge:

> *A belief counts as knowledge, just in case it is a normatively motivated true judgment.*

Let me clarify a few additional points about this definition. First, it seems to me that this kind of account of knowledge isn't externalist, at least in terms of the familiar forms of externalism. There is no need to fully adjudicate this question here, but I doubt that the internality of motivational relations (i.e., the fact that it is a relation between meanings) is compatible with accounts on which a belief counts as knowledge when it is caused in an appropriate way, formed by a reliable process, objectively likely to be true, et cetera. The grounding relations characteristic of knowledge are *internal* to the sphere of meaning or phenomena. This is not, however, to say that I have to recognize my motive and decide to judge in accordance with it in order for it to motivate my judgment. One might plausibly think (though certainly not all do) that internalist accounts of *justification* require such a standard: in order to be justified in a judgment, I must recognize my warrant and judge for reason of that warrant. But *motivation* is spontaneous, not active, and need not be explicit. Consequently, I need not recognize my motive in order to judge/act/perceive for that motive. Considerable nuance would be required, then, to square this account with access internalism (though they are not necessarily incompatible, given my claim that motives are at least partially open to explicitation). Some form of mentalism (the view that what justifies a belief is a mental state) is probably most congenial to my view—though even this would raise thorny questions about Merleau-Ponty's ontology of meanings. I would prefer simply to say that, for Merleau-Ponty, the grounding relations characteristic of knowledge must be internal to the sphere of meanings or phenomena. But let us put these issues aside for now.

Second, I suggested above that the relation between perception and knowledge, qua motivation, is spontaneous, but I should be more precise about this claim. Are we to think that a motive *brings about* judgments, that it *disposes* one to judge in a certain way, or some other option? This is a difficult question, one that requires more phenomenological discussion, and one could accept a motivational account of knowledge and give a different answer to this question than mine. In my view, first, we should *not* think that motivation *brings about* judgments. Certainly, at the level of spontaneity, motivation can simply bring about certain states: for example, perceptual motives bring about a perception. But motivation does not simply bring about judgment. I can perceive snow, for example, and be motivated to judge that it is snowing,

without thereby actually forming the judgment that it is snowing. Or, I may have other considerations that prevent me from forming that judgment (e.g., I know that it is 80°F outside). In general, motivation does not simply bring about our judgments, because in moving from perception to judgment, we are transitioning from the sphere of spontaneity to the sphere of activity. And motivation does not compel or bring about my *activity*—it simply inclines me to act in certain ways. I need to actively affirm a proposition to which I am motivated in order to form the relevant judgment.

Provisionally, one could use the language of dispositions here, where having a disposition judge *p* means something like: in appropriate circumstances (e.g., when I am asked what I think, or have reason to question my beliefs), I will ordinarily judge *p*.[27] This language seems fine to me, as long as it does not reduce motivation to the rank of explanation—as long, in other words, as we are not simply saying, "My disposition is how my judgment came about." Nor does it have to, as long as we can understand that some dispositions are normative. For example, if I have a disposition to act generously, this just means that under ordinary circumstances, I will act out of a responsiveness to the relevant normative forces of a situation (e.g., the wants or requirements of those around me). Similarly, when a disposition is rooted in a normative motivation, then the disposition is not arbitrary, in the manner that I might have an arbitrary disposition to paint sailboats rather than horses. Rather, it is a kind of responsiveness to normative forces. In other words, if I am motivated to judge *p* by the relevant perception, then that I have a disposition to judge *p* just means that under ordinary circumstances, I will judge in response to the relevant epistemically normative forces (proximally, my perception). On this picture, I need only judge in accordance with such an (appropriate) disposition, in order for that judgment to count as knowledge (I need not, for example, explicitly reflect on that disposition and affirm it—I need only act in accordance with it).

This "normatively motivated judgment" account of knowledge, which I am attributing to Merleau-Ponty, might at first seem foreign to contemporary epistemology. But, as an aside, I think it is not actually so different from certain kinds of virtue epistemology that have become familiar over the past few decades.[28] Consider the picture proposed by Zagzebski. One of the formulations she suggests for her definition of knowledge runs as follows: "Knowledge is a state of true belief arising out of acts of intellectual virtue."[29] An act of an intellectual virtue, in turn, is defined, in part, as "an act that arises from the motivational component of [that virtue]."[30] Similarly, Fairweather

argues that "a belief will count as knowledge only if it is properly connected to an epistemic motivation."[31] Here, an epistemic motivation is defined as follows: "A person has an epistemic motivation if and only if he has a desire for truth and this state influences his conduct."[32] In other words, if a state of belief arises out of an appropriate motivation (i.e., a motivation that is a component of a virtue, or a motivation oriented toward epistemic ends like truth), then it will count as knowledge. To simplify, I think we can sum up the view in the phrase "Knowledge is a state of virtuously motivated belief." So, the notion that knowledge can be defined in terms of motivation is not wholly unfamiliar.[33]

Indeed, what we might, along such lines, call a "virtuous motivation" (i.e., a motivation that is a component of a virtue) is quite close to what I have attempted to think of as "normative motivation." After all, I have described motivation as a form of spontaneous or bodily alertness to normative forces, and it seems like a plausible step to describe this "alertness" in terms of character traits that can be more or less well attuned to such normative forces (i.e., as virtues or vices). Of course, I am not using the term "motivation" in quite the same sense as these virtue epistemologists. First, the latter think of motivation in terms of desire or emotion, whereas in my terms desires or emotions can be motives, but so can perceptions, beliefs, et cetera.[34] Second, virtue epistemologists don't think of motivation in terms of bodily spontaneity, that is, as a sui generis logical space—Fairweather or Zagzebski could comfortably speak of being motivated by a desire for truth to reason in an appropriate manner.[35] I just mean to point out that mine is not the only account to think of knowledge starting from motivation rather than reliability, justification, and so on.

Third, again, in challenging the justified true-belief account of knowledge, I do not mean to deny that there is such a thing as a space of reasons within which we are concerned with justification, nor to deny that knowledge belongs within this space. Any judgment motivated by perception, because as a judgment it is actively affirmed, has the capacity to be revised in response to reasons or to be taken as a reason. While I affirm a judgment in response to the normative force of perception, I can affirm anew or deny that judgment in response to the rational connections between my judgments. Thus, the judgments motivated by perception, because they are judgments, stand within the space of reasons, and are capable of entering into justificatory relationships with other judgments. But the fact that judgments grounded in perception belong within the space of reasons does not imply that the *relation* between

perception and judgment is justificatory, or that this relation stands within the space of reasons. To belong within the space of reasons, in this sense, a judgment need not in fact be justified; it need only admit of justification, of affirmation or denial in the face of reasons. To say that judgments belong within the space of reasons, then, does not mean that they, in being grounded in perceptions, have been justified. My point is that what makes a judgment knowledge is not its standing in the space of reasons—though qua knowledge it does have this standing—but merely its being normatively grounded. In other words, knowledge is included within the space of reasons, but that does not entail that something counts as knowledge *just because* of its standing in the space of reasons. To be clear, my intention is not to delegitimate justification as a project. On the contrary, justification is essential to our epistemic practices. My point is only that justification is never ultimate, itself always being grounded on motivation. At the limit of the space of reasons, one judgment can justify another only because it has itself been motivated in the course of perceptual experience. The logical space of motives contains and, in fact, continually breathes life into, the space of reasons.

PART II

Defending the Account

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL JUDGMENTS

Part 1 should have made the general claim of this book clear: motivation is an epistemic ground, and, indeed, the form of epistemic grounding that describes the genesis of *all* knowledge out of perception. In part 2, I defend this claim. Following Husserl in *Experience and Judgment*, we can distinguish broadly between two classes of judgment that are grounded in perception: first, particular judgments about the perceptual world; and second, universal (including a priori) judgments. I will consider the second kind of judgment in chapter 4. For now, let us consider the first, the relation between a perception and a judgment about the object of that perception.

It is uncontroversial that such judgments, what I will call perceptual judgments or (when the appropriate conditions are met) perceptual knowledge, are grounded in the perceptual experience they explicate. For example, if you were to ask me why I think that the sky above is cloudy or the pavement wet, I could appropriately reply, "Because that's how it looks to me." In other words: "Because I perceive it so." This response is simply a way of expressing the fact that my perception is the ground of my judgment. Undoubtedly, at least a very great part of our beliefs about the perceptual world is grounded on our perceptual experience.[1] Not so obvious is how this grounding should be understood. How, exactly, do perceptions give rise to perceptual judgments? My contention will be that the kind of ground with which perception supplies perceptual knowledge is motivation.

To get the merit of this position into view, I will first follow Merleau-Ponty's procedure of dialectically examining opposed options. In particular, I contrast this motivation view with the two main positions available in current debates about the relation between perception and perceptual judgment, exemplified by the work of Davidson and McDowell. In brief, Davidson's view is that perceptions *cause* beliefs. He claims that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief," and because perceptions

aren't beliefs, or any other sort of propositional attitude, they can't stand in a logical relation to beliefs.[2] Since perceptions cannot justify beliefs, and they evidently ground beliefs in some manner, it seems instead that the former merely cause the latter. McDowell, by contrast, has argued that perceptions *can* justify beliefs. In *Mind and World*, McDowell claims that, in virtue of the kind of contents they have, perceptions can stand in logical relations with judgments (i.e., perceptions can count as *reasons for* judgments).[3]

These two options, causation and reason, remain the basic terms of contemporary debates about perceptual justification. But Merleau-Ponty allows us to notice that the conceptual setup for the debate is misleading; it depends on an insufficient phenomenology of the kind of grounding pertinent to the relation between perception and judgment. In fact, neither reason nor causality correctly describes this relation. What stymies the McDowell-Davidson debate, and the ensuing literature, is that both accept the dichotomy of reason and causality. But this dichotomy is a false one: motivation is a third kind of epistemic ground. As Mark Wrathall has argued, motivation can provide a new and better means of describing the relation between perception and judgment.[4] What I intend to do in the present chapter is to take up and further this argument. As we will see, describing this relation in terms of motivation will open a new avenue for thinking about knowledge, one that avoids both Davidson's "coherentism" and McDowell's "minimal empiricism."[5]

Note that conducting my exposition in these terms, namely, by contrasting Merleau-Ponty's position to those represented in contemporary debates, will require me to move beyond Merleau-Ponty's own explicit claims in his writings. I will adduce a number of arguments throughout this chapter that are not, strictly speaking, found in Merleau-Ponty. But the picture that results is, in my opinion, genuinely Merleau-Pontian, and has as its aim the elucidation of Merleau-Ponty's own thought.

DAVIDSON AND MCDOWELL

First, let's consider the two received options in greater depth. Davidson, in his "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," lays out a puzzle for empiricist accounts of knowledge. Empiricism here names something like the view that our knowledge is justified by our perception. Against this view, Davidson argues that perceptions are not the kinds of things that *can* justify knowledge. As we saw in chapter 2, knowledge is propositional, but perceptions aren't;

for example, I know *that* the tree is shedding its leaves, but I perceive the tree shedding its leaves. And here lies the problem: surely only a belief (i.e., something having propositional content) can serve as a *reason* for holding another belief. According to Davidson, we can only *justify* our beliefs on the basis of other beliefs. For example, if you ask me why I think it has rained, my response should take the form: "Because I think *that* the street is wet" (or simply the referent of the "that" clause: "Because the street is wet"), that is, in virtue of some propositional content. But perceptions are not beliefs, not propositional, and so it seems that they cannot serve as reasons for—and so cannot justify—knowledge. But since our perceptions do evidently ground our judgments, but cannot do so in the mode of reason, they must instead *cause* our judgments. This leads Davidson to a coherentist position, according to which perceptions *cause* beliefs and these beliefs are then *justified* with respect to their degree of coherence with the full body of our beliefs.[6]

McDowell's *Mind and World* poses a different resolution to this problem. McDowell has his own way of formulating the issue here: in terms of two conflicting philosophical pressures, which *Mind and World* aims to reconcile. On the one hand, knowledge seems to entail answerability to the empirical world.[7] The ultimate verdict on our judgments and beliefs, according to this minimal sort of empiricism, comes from the "tribunal of experience." Without this responsibility to the world of perception, our judgments ultimately fail to gain traction—we would have perfect freedom in judgments, in a way that leaves our judgments ungrounded in anything outside of our freedom. Thus, if we are really to have knowledge at all, our judgments must be grounded by perception.[8]

On the other hand, a necessary condition of knowledge, according to McDowell, is justification. Again, as Sellars puts it, "In characterizing an episode or a state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says."[9] As we saw in chapter 1, McDowell, following Sellars, contrasts the "logical space of reasons" (what I have simply called "reason") with the "logical space of nature" (what I have called "causality"), the space in which the natural sciences function. Natural sciences *explain* rather than *justify*; knowing a cause helps to explain an effect, but it would be a mistake to take a cause as a warrant or justification for an effect. But empiricists have traditionally thought of perception as bound to the logical space of nature: sensations or "impingements" are caused in us lawfully according to natural processes. If our perception causally grounds

belief, though, then perception can't figure as a justification for knowledge, because this grounding would belong to the wrong logical space, one lacking normative import: if our perceptions belong only to the logical space of nature, they can serve at best as *explanations* of our beliefs, but not as *justifications*.[10] Conventional empiricism depends on a conflation of the two logical spaces, such that perceptions seem both to cause beliefs and to serve as justifications for beliefs—this conflation, ultimately, is what McDowell and Sellars attack as "the Myth of the Given." McDowell thus claims that for knowledge to be possible, both (a) our judgments must be responsible to perception; and (b) perception must be the kind of thing that can justify our judgments. The question, then, is simply how we must conceive perception in order to accommodate both of these demands.

According to McDowell, as long as we conceive perception as purely receptive, as belonging squarely to the logical space of nature, it will be impossible to accommodate these two pressures. Instead, we must understand perception as belonging within the logical space of reasons, that is, as constitutively shaped by our activity, or, more specifically, by the capacities exercised in judgments (in McDowell's view, conceptual capacities). Only if it is constitutively shaped by our rationality in this manner, can perception serve as a warrant for belief.

My view will be that Davidson lays out a genuine puzzle: How can nonpropositional perceptions justify propositional judgments? Indeed, given the understanding of reasoning laid out in chapter 1, it seems eminently plausible to me that only propositional items can serve as reasons for belief. But this point does not get us to Davidson's conclusion, namely, that perceptions cause judgments and so what we need is a coherence theory of knowledge. With McDowell, I believe that perceptions must ground judgments in some normative manner. My point is just that these insights are compatible: if perceptions normatively ground judgments, and only propositions can serve as reasons, then evidently we need a third option, a form of grounding not reducible to causality or reason, namely, motivation.

CAUSALITY

To support the motivation view, I will first consider the shortcoming of its alternatives, starting with the causal view. I will treat this view briefly for present purposes, since if one accepts my claims in the previous two chapters,

the causal view should appear straightforwardly flawed. It will be much more difficult to see where my account of perception and judgment diverges from the reason view, and so I will focus my argument there.

In brief, there are two main reasons that the relation between perception and judgment should not be construed as causal, namely, that this relation is normative and meaningful in a way that causality can't account for. First, the relation between perception and perceptual judgments is normative, that is, perception not only grounds our perceptual judgments, but norms them, establishing some as better or worse responses to itself. This point is a way of registering the fact that I don't simply form perceptual judgments in response to perception, but find my perceptual judgments normatively constrained by that perception. If I perceive a willow (and perceive it *as* a willow), then I will experience the judgments "That tree is a willow" and "That tree is an oak" differently. I don't just happen to make the first judgment: I find the first judgment right and the second wrong. That perception does exert this normative force becomes especially clear when we contrast the normativity at play in perceptual judgments with the judgments I make on the basis of my imaginings.[11] The former are normatively constrained in a way the latter are not, and the factor distinguishing the two is just the perceptual ground of the former. But, if the relationship between perception and perceptual judgments really is normative, it is not clear how a causal relationship could instigate this kind of normativity: one is not right or wrong to have been caused such as one has.[12]

Second, it is because perceptions are meaningful that they can ground judgments. If I walk into an empty room, it is because I see the room *as* empty, that is, because I have this perceptual meaning, that the judgment "The room is empty" is grounded. We can see how bare sensation would underdetermine perceptual judgments by looking at cases of perceptual ambiguity. In the familiar "My Wife and My Mother-in-Law" illustration (see fig. 1.3), the same sensory content can be perceived in two different ways (i.e., under the meaning of a young or an old woman). Depending on which perceptual meaning is operative, two quite different judgments will be grounded by one and the same sensory content. Thus, perceptions seem to ground judgments in virtue of the meanings they present, rather than simply in virtue of their sensory content. But, as we saw in chapter 1, causal relationships don't operate in virtue of meanings.

A defender of Davidson would likely reply that there is no relevant sense in which anything other than a belief can norm a belief. In talking of

perceptions, either I am talking about perceptual *beliefs*, in which case the relation I am describing is a relation between beliefs and could well be described in terms of rational relations of coherence; or I am talking about sensations, in which case the relation is not normative but merely causal. But as I argued in chapter 2, neither of these options offers a good phenomenology of perception—perception is meaningful, and so not a bare sensation, but also not propositional—and so we should not accept the above dichotomy.[13]

These arguments are clearly not decisive, but they do suffice to indicate some major considerations mitigating against the causal view. If the causal view does, in fact, fail to account for the relation between perception and perceptual judgments, should we instead seek to account for this relation in terms of reason?

REASON

As we shall see, the reason view (as exemplified here by McDowell) also will not work, because it would require the relation between perception and perceptual judgments to be at the disposal of our active thinking, which it is not.[14]

First, let me explain McDowell's position in a little more depth. McDowell thinks that the conceptual capacities engaged in perception put us in a position to be justified in knowledge. The idea is that our judgments are ultimately justified by appeals to perception, as indicated in claims like "It seems this way to me"; or, "It looks like . . ."; or, "It appears that . . ."[15] If asked why I think that bird over there is an osprey, I could appropriately reply, "Well, because it looks that way to me." In this way, perceptions are our ultimate reasons for holding certain beliefs. Further, perception is not an inferential reason (i.e., it is not like a premise for a conclusion) but instead immediately puts us in a position to know that certain propositions are true or false.[16] McDowell's view is thus that the nonpropositional content of perception noninferentially justifies the corresponding judgments.

Now, if perception were propositional, then we might exemplify these perceptual justifiers as follows: "I perceive that 'that is an osprey' "; or, "The content of my perception is that 'that is an osprey.' " And it would be a short step from the perception that "that is an osprey" to the judgment that "that is an osprey." But, since perception is nonpropositional, phrases like "It seems to me that 'that is an osprey' "; and "It looks that way [as if 'that is

an osprey']" are somewhat misleading, for taken literally they suggest that what one sees in perception are propositions, thereby saddling perception with propositional content that it doesn't possess.[17] Instead, according to McDowell, such phrases are best understood as meaning that one's perception "inclines" one to say, for example, "That is an osprey." McDowell writes that "such locutions . . . accept, in their 'that' clauses, specifications of things one's perception puts one in a position to know noninferentially."[18] Thus, if I reply, "Because it looks that way to me," I don't mean that I literally see the proposition, but that my perception disposes me to form such a judgment: perception norms the field of possible propositions one could form in response to perception, even though it does not itself include any of these propositions.[19]

This way of construing the bond between perception and judgment as rational, I now argue, will not work. Justifications like "Because it seems that way" are not really satisfactory as *rational* grounds for judgment. And the reason for this is that we cannot fully take responsibility for them, or, in other words, the relation between perception and judgment isn't active in the sense McDowell requires to count it as justification.[20]

What would it take for the relation between perception and judgment to be rational? I have argued that active revisability is the appropriate condition. And I think McDowell would actually agree here. Consider his answer—in my view, a good one—to this question in his criticism of Evans's claim that perceptions can have nonconceptual content and yet stand in a rational relation to judgments.[21] McDowell criticizes this position, in part, on the grounds that any account that leaves perception outside the sphere of activity cannot treat the relation between perception and judgment as susceptible to active thinking. But, McDowell claims, only relations susceptible to active thinking can be considered as rational. As McDowell puts it, "If these relations [between perception and judgment] are to be genuinely recognizable as reason-constituting, we cannot confine spontaneity within a boundary across which the relations are supposed to hold. The relations themselves must be able to come under the self-scrutiny of active thinking."[22] To be clear, McDowell is not claiming that rational relations *are actually* apprehended in active thinking (e.g., deliberation, judgment), that reason should be understood as active thinking. He is claiming only that rational relations *must be able* to be apprehended in active thinking.[23] More specifically, McDowell understands this capacity of "falling under the self-scrutiny of active thinking" in terms of being "liable to revision, if that were to be what the self-scrutiny of active thinking

recommends."[24] Thus, McDowell takes it that for a relation to be rational, it must be liable to revision by active thinking.[25]

But the relation between perception and judgment does not meet this criterion. In chapter 1, I argued that our active thinking does not extend to our perceiving. But we can now point out that it also does not extend to the way perception inclines us to judge, or to what it puts us in a position to know; such judgments are grounded spontaneously (in the sense I have been using the word, rather than in McDowell's sense, which is actually closer to what I call "active"). In other words, we are not free to revise or alter this relation under the recommendation of active thinking—this relation is not *liable* to revision. Suppose that, though it appears to me that the bird over there is an osprey, I am inclined to trust the eyesight of my friend—to whom it appears that that over there is an eagle—over my own, and so I judge that what appears to me as an osprey is in fact an eagle. While I am free to form this judgment, I am *not* free to revise the inclination to judge given me by perception; I cannot make perception put me in a position to know that the bird is an eagle. My perception continues to incline me to judge that the bird before us is an osprey, and not to incline me to judge that it is an eagle. Thus, we ought to say that while we *are* active with respect to our judgments, we *are not* active with respect to the relation between perception and judgment. Now, as I have already pointed out, this point is perfectly compatible with perception being *partially* open to revision by active thinking. It is just not *wholly* open to such revision. And if this is so, then we cannot place the relation fully under the "self-scrutiny of active thinking."

One might object here that one can revise judgments about the perception, and this is all that matters. If the street's being wet is my reason for judging that "it's raining," I will at most revise my judgment that "the street is wet"—I do not, of course, revise the street. Similarly, one might think, if I learn that what I see is not in fact an osprey, then I should at most revise my judgment "I *perceive* that 'that is an osprey,' " not the perception itself. But this analogy is weak, since, according to McDowell, we are not considering a relation between two judgments, but a relation between a perception and a judgment. The question really is whether I can revise the perception, not a judgment about what I perceive. And while I could revise a judgment about what I perceive, I cannot so revise the perception.[26]

Let me be more precise. It is true that our perceptual judgments are revisable. In fact, they can be revised in one of two ways: either (a) one's perception changes, thus disposing us to form a new, different judgment; or (b) one has

reasons independently of perception for revising one's judgment. But neither of these two modes of revision can give McDowell what he needs in order to count the relation as rational. In the first case, the revision is not by the recommendation of active thinking. It is, in fact, totally spontaneous: either the new judgment falls into view, or it does not. In the second case, the relation between perception and judgment is not revised, but simply ignored. The relation between perception and judgment is thus revisable only in the sense that one can always withhold affirmation from the inclination given us by perception. I may have other reasons for doubting the testimony of perception (e.g., my friend's superior eyesight). I may even be embarking on a Cartesian project of radical doubt. Whatever the case, whereas the inclination provided by perception is spontaneous (and not actively revisable), I *am* active with respect to judgments, for I have the capacity to affirm or deny any judgment. In this sense, my judgments do genuinely fall under the "self-scrutiny of active thinking." However, the bond between perception and judgment is not thereby *revised*. It is just superseded by other considerations. The important point is that this power tells us only about judgment, and not about the relation between perception and judgment, which is what McDowell needs it to do.

Illusions make this distinction between activity and spontaneity particularly clear. For example, in the Zöllner illusion (see fig. 3.1) parallel lines appear convergent, even when one *knows* that the lines are parallel. In such cases, not only does one lack active control over one's perception, but, with it, one lacks active control over what perception inclines one to judge: perception inclines us toward the proposition that the lines are convergent, not the proposition that the lines are parallel. But my judgment is different, for I am free to deny this inclination. Perhaps I have measured the distance between the lines at various points and found these distances equal. So, I have good reason to deny the proposition that the lines are convergent. But whereas my denial is active, the bond itself is spontaneous: perception may stubbornly incline me to judge that the lines are convergent, despite my knowledge that the lines do not converge. Admittedly, I am probably exaggerating the discrepancy here. With this illusion, too, it is probably truer to say that we do not exactly perceive the lines as stably convergent or parallel. But the same analysis applies: here, too, the lack of a stable, determinate perception conflicts with the stability and determinacy of the judgment that the lines are parallel, and we are unable to actively stabilize or determine our perception in response to judgment. No argument, no host of reasons, will alter this testimony of perception; though reason may well sever or bracket the bond

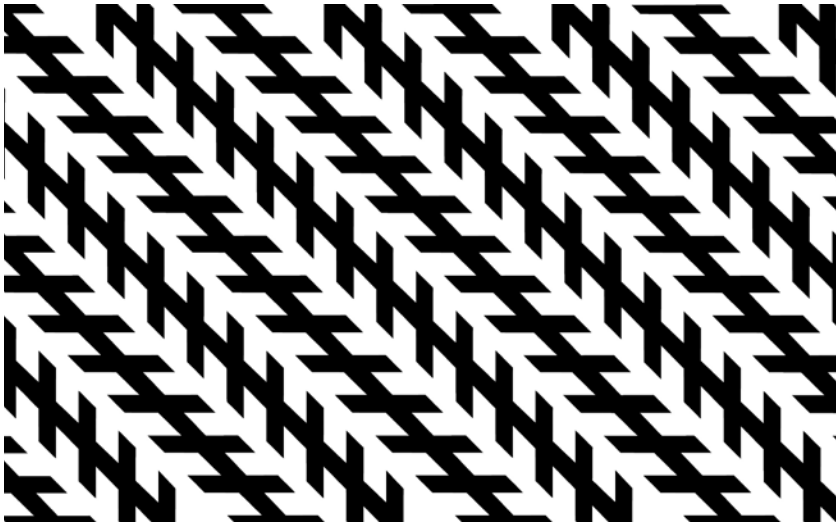

FIGURE 3.1. Zöllner illusion. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

between perception and judgment, this bond persists beneath my active refusal of it. Consequently, the fact that reason can grant or withhold approval from this bond does not make the bond itself rational.

I have argued that the bond between perception and judgment shouldn't be understood as rational, because it doesn't meet the criterion McDowell rightly sets for rational relations: that they are *able* to come under the self-scrutiny of active thinking in the sense of revisability. One could respond to this argument by noting that one *can* take the very motivational bond between perception and judgment as a reason. Active thinking can survey the motivational bond between perception and judgment, and affirm it as a reason for judgment. I can take, for example, the proposition "I perceive that the lines are convergent" as a reason for the judgment "The lines are convergent," a reason that in this case is simply overruled by other reasons. The problem with this response is that not only is this not the kind of relation McDowell claimed to hold between perception and judgment (insofar as it is inferential), but it simply defers the problem: one must now explain a new connection between perception and judgment, namely, between perception and the judgment "I perceive that . . ."

To be more precise, this strategy relies on a subtle ambiguity. Ginsborg has distinguished two senses of reason.[27] In one sense, we take *facts* as reasons, and it seems wrongheaded to even consider psychological states, like beliefs

or judgments, as reasons. As Stampe puts it, "If I believe it has rained because the streets are wet, it is the fact that the streets are wet, not the fact that I believe them to be, that comprises my reason for believing that the streets are wet."[28] I take the fact that the streets are wet, not my belief that they are wet, as my reason for believing that it has rained. But in another sense, it is natural to take psychological states, like beliefs or judgments, as reasons. For example, someone attempting to reconstruct my reasons for judgment will cite my other judgments or beliefs as reasons: "His judgment that it had rained followed from his judgment that the streets were wet." Reason in the first sense (reason$_1$) names "the fact which presents itself to the subject as favoring the belief."[29] Reason in the second sense (reason$_2$) names the psychological state or mental attitude justifying the judgment. More generally, we can distinguish between grounds$_1$ and grounds$_2$.

In considering the relation between perception and judgment, we have been considering reasons$_2$: we are asking what kind of mental state grounds our judgment. McDowell's claim is that the kind of psychological state justifying one's judgments of perception is perception. But I have argued that reason does not describe the manner in which perceptions ground$_2$ judgments, because of our passivity to this grounding. If one now takes the tack, in response, of claiming that we do take perceptions as grounds of judgments (and thus this grounding is not merely passive), one has subtly shifted focus from grounds$_2$ to grounds$_1$. This response takes one's perception as a fact that serves as a reason$_1$ for one's judgment. But it is no longer the perception itself, but a judgment *about* perception (i.e., "I perceive that . . ."), that grounds$_2$ one's judgment. And, again, this merely pushes back the question about the relation between perception and judgment, because one must now explain how one arrives at the judgment *about* perception, the "I perceive that . . . ," in the first place. Thus, this response does not make perception the ground of judgment in the sense that is relevant to McDowell, though it may well describe a perfectly legitimate sense in which perception *can* be taken as a reason for judgment. Notice that if we took perception as a reason in *this* sense, we would preserve Davidson's insight that only a proposition can count as a reason for a belief, without denying perception a kind of justificatory role (derivative on its motivating role) in our judgments of perception—though a very different one from that which McDowell claimed to exist: perception could be a reason. I don't have any concerns about taking perception as a reason in this derivative sense, since all I am concerned with is the *primary* bond between perception and judgment.[30]

MOTIVATION

I hope the foregoing has shown that both the causal and the reason views face major setbacks when trying to account for the grounding relation between perception and perceptual judgments. If this is so, then we have good reason to seek an alternative. At an abstract level, motivation should already be an obvious candidate. If the problems with these views are that the former cannot describe the relation between perception and judgment (a) as normative and (b) in terms of meanings, and the latter cannot describe this relation (c) as spontaneous, then given the features of motivation outlined in chapter 1, motivation has the clear benefit of allowing us to preserve all three of these characteristics: motivational relations are spontaneous and normative relations between meanings. So, there is perhaps already a considerable appeal to the motivation view.

Merleau-Ponty, for his part, seems to adopt this view. In distinguishing between perception and judgment, he argues that "there is, prior to objective relations, a perceptual syntax that is articulated according to its own rules: the breaking up of previous relations and the establishing of new ones—judgment—only express the outcome of this deep operation and are its final report" (*PhP*, 38). So, Merleau-Ponty thinks of judgment as a set of relations posterior to, and expressive of, the prior set of relations characteristic of perception, also calling judgment the "optional expression" of perception (*PhP*, 37). And he describes this sort of expression in terms of motivation. In analyzing the case of illusion, he writes that the "signification adhering to the figure . . . motivates and is, so to speak, *behind* the false judgment" (*PhP*, 37). That is, the perceptual sense *motivates* the judgment, rather than causing or justifying it. Of course, in this case, the judgment is false because it is motivated by an illusion, but Merleau-Ponty equally speaks of the "motivated judgment of true perception" (*PhP*, 36).

But if, in motivating a judgment, perception does not simply bring about a judgment, nor deliver a proposition that could warrant a judgment, then how, exactly, does it ground that judgment? We need to work out, in a little more detail, what exactly it looks like for a perception to motivate a judgment.[31] I would suggest that the right way to do so is in terms of the phenomenological notions of fulfillment and evidence.

Consider Merleau-Ponty's claim that "there is a difference between the motivated judgement [*le jugement motivé*] of a true perception and the empty judgment [*le jugement vide*] of a false perception" (*PhP*, 36). Though

Merleau-Ponty makes this point in the context of discussing hallucination (his account of which we will not consider until chapter 5), there is no reason it can't be generalized: there is a difference between judgments that are *motivated* by perception and judgments that are left *empty* by it.[32] I take it that in drawing this distinction, Merleau-Ponty is referencing Husserl's distinction between empty and fulfilled judgments, and so it should help to make use of that distinction here. According to Husserl, a judgment is fulfilled when "*the intentional essence of an act of intuition* gets more or less perfectly *fitted into the semantic essence of the act of expression*."[33] In other words, a judgment is fulfilled when it is matched with an "intuitive" content (in this case, a perception). For example, if I perceive a white carnation, this perception provides "intuitive" (perceptual) content to the judgment "The carnation is white," and so fulfills this judgment, but provides no intuitive (perceptual) content to the judgment "The carnation is blue," and so leaves it empty. I'll also use Husserl's term "evidence" in this context. Husserl uses this term to describe "the giving of something itself."[34] A judgment achieves *evidence*, in Husserl's terms, when it is intuitively fulfilled. While I am in the hallway, for example, I can judge for myself that the room I will enter is full of people, but the judgment is *empty* until I walk into the room and perceive for myself. In entering the room, then, my judgment becomes *evident*.

Now, Merleau-Ponty, like Husserl, ties these concepts of evidence or fulfillment to motivation, contrasting between a motivated and an empty judgment.[35] The idea, as I understand it, is that a judgment is *motivated* by a perception insofar as that judgment is *fulfilled* or *evidentiated* by that perception; what motivates just this judgment and not another is that perception provides this judgment with intuitive fulfillment and not another. And, indeed, describing motivation in these terms fits nicely the features of perceptual grounding we have been considering: fulfillment is a meaning-relation, is normative, and is spontaneous.

First, I would argue that it is only in virtue of its meaning that a perception can fulfill a judgment. Only if I perceive a fir tree *as a fir tree* will the judgment "That's a fir tree" be fulfilled. If I lack a perceptual schema for "fir tree," or if I mistake the fir for a pine, then the judgment will go unfulfilled. We should think of fulfillment, then, as a relation between perceptual and predicative meanings.[36]

Second, in my view, it is just this fulfillment or evidence that is the source of normativity for perceptual judgments (i.e., that establishes some judgments as more appropriate to perception than others). If I must decide between the

judgments "The carnation is blue" and "The carnation is white," I am not indifferent to this choice—I recognize the one judgment as right and the other as wrong—and the difference does not come from some exterior set of reasons, but is right there in perception itself: perception motivates the one judgment, but leaves the other empty. In other words, it is the way the one judgment stands out to me as more or less perfectly fit to the perception and the other as not that constrains how I judge. In this sense, we can say that perceptions *norm* judgments in virtue of the fact that they *evidentiate* them.

I have, in previous chapters, argued that the disposition to form certain judgments is tied to the norming of these judgments. When I form a judgment in response to perception, I do not run through every conceivable judgment to see which fit and which do not. Nor do I usually even face a decision between judgments like "The carnation is blue" and "The carnation is white." Instead, a certain judgment stands out to me, or, rather, perception disposes me to form some judgment or another. And this judgment stands out to me just because it has normative weight for me. That is to say, perception *disposes* one to form a certain judgment precisely by *norming* one's judgments. If I am asked what that bird over there is, and I respond, "That's a starling," I will not first form the proposition and afterward find it to be true. Instead, I form just that proposition precisely because it appears to be true. And while it is certainly possible for me to form a variety of propositions and then consult perception about them, this is not ordinarily how propositions about perception are formed. Normally, the perceived meaning gives rise to the propositional one. Now, if the way judgments are *normed* by perception has to do with the way perceptions *fulfill* judgments, then it follows that the disposition to form a judgment is inseparably tied to the way perception fulfills that judgment. Again, I do not arbitrarily form a judgment: I form just such a judgment because it is normatively suggested by my perceptual situation, and it is suggested by my perceptual situation because it is just the judgment that perception fulfills. Thus, motivation, my disposition to form a particular judgment, is inseparable from the way in which perception fulfills that judgment.

Third, notice that I cannot actively make a judgment *evident*. Certainly, I can actively form judgments at will, for example, I am free to form the judgment "This room is full of people" in the hallway and even if, as I walk in, I find no one there. But I cannot actively decide which judgment perception disposes me to form, since I cannot actively make a judgment *evident*. Alone in the dark room, I know too well that no amount of willpower can fulfill my

judgment. At most I can put myself in the right circumstance for a judgment to be evidentiated (e.g., I cannot will my judgment "It is hot outside" into fulfillment, but I can walk outside into the heat). Thus, the evidentiation of judgments by experience (just like perceptual experience) is spontaneously and not actively determined.

In summary, I understand the claim that perception *motivates* judgments to mean that perception disposes us to form certain judgments in virtue of *evidentiating* those judgments. This Merleau-Pontian account of the relation between perception and judgment can make sense of the meaningful, normative, *and* spontaneous character of the grounding relation between perception and judgment, and so should have considerable appeal. Moreover, as we will see in the next section, this account has the benefit of allowing us to acknowledge that perception and judgment can have different kinds of content and nevertheless stand in a grounding relation, since transcendence is an integral feature of motivation.

CONFIRMATION THROUGH ORIGINAL EXPRESSION

In this final section, I would like to support the motivation view I have been proposing through a brief phenomenological analysis of original acts of expression. My hope is that doing so will provide my account with an intuitive appeal that it may currently lack. The contemporary debate I have been considering centers around how to analyze acts of expression, by which I mean acts in which a perception is articulated in propositional form. But the *sorts* of expressions that this debate considers are all of a particular kind: they are familiar expressions, expressions readily at hand for capturing the content of perception. But not all expressions are at hand in this sense. In other cases—what I will call original acts of expression—a perception cannot be expressed in a familiar or cliché manner and so requires a novel judgment. By original expression, then, I mean something much like what Merleau-Ponty calls "speaking speech," as opposed to "spoken speech" (*PhP*, 202–3), where the latter names the already constituted system of familiar "means of expression," and the former names a "meaningful intention in a nascent state" that must create the means to express itself by taking up and transforming already existing language. Original acts of expression are evidently a kind of expression, and so are relevant to the present debate. But my contention will be that if we shift our focus to these *original* acts of expression,

then the reason and causal views will appear far less attractive than they might have initially.

Consider, for example, a novice wine drinker sampling an unfamiliar wine. She will be hard-pressed to find the right means to express her perception. Of course, she can form *some* judgments, for example, "This tastes like wine," and maybe even "The wine is sweet." But she wants to do better, to articulate beyond these commonplaces the nuance of her perception. So she searches for the right words. She tries on various options for size, but she can't quite find anything that fits. Likely, she can't find any definite contour in the taste on to which she can hold. It isn't that she has some definite idea of the taste for which she just can't find the word. Instead, she isn't even totally sure what the taste is or if there is a word for it: the taste is vague or ambiguous. She runs through the perception trying to fix just what she has perceived, until suddenly she strikes upon a proposition that suits the taste: "The wine is acidic."

If we think through this act of expression closely, we find a puzzle. On the one hand, her gustatory perception of the wine grounds her judgment: she recognizes the judgment as true only because it has been evidentiated by perception. The perception, as I said previously, norms the field of possible propositions, making this particular judgment a good one. On the other hand, the perception did not itself contain the proposition. If it had, our budding oenophile would not have had to search for the right words to fix her perception; she would have been struggling only to remember the words. But this was not the case. Instead, her perception was vague and indeterminate, and if we remember her first taste, we recall that it did not contain the acidity or exclude other qualities. It was too vague for this. The judgment *determines* the perception, fixing it as acidic and not, for example, buttery. What is puzzling is that the perception did not contain the proposition "The wine is acidic," and yet when the proposition is suggested she *recognizes* her perception in it immediately. More, the perception itself is determined through the judgment. Likely, the content of the perception is actually enriched by the judgment, and when she returns to the wine the taste will mean something more to her than it did before. After all, this is part of how one becomes skilled or discerning in one's tastes: by enriching one's capacity for perception through articulation and expression. Or, to use other terms, what is puzzling here is that the perception grounds the judgment, while itself being transformed by the judgment.[37]

This phenomenon may become more apparent if we look at other kinds of intentions. Consider Maggie Nelson's struggle to express her desire for a blue:

> But what kind of love is it, really? Don't fool yourself and call it sublimity. Admit that you have stood in front of a little pile of powdered ultramarine pigment in a glass cup at a museum and felt a stinging desire. But to do what? Liberate it? Purchase it? Ingest it? . . . You might want to reach out and disturb the pile of pigment, for example, first staining your fingers with it, then staining the world. You might want to dilute it and swim in it, you might want to rouge your nipples with it, you might want to paint a virgin's robe with it. But you still wouldn't be accessing the blue of it. Not exactly.[38]

None of these expressions quite do the desire justice. Certainly, some are ruled out: it would be clumsy to judge the desire sublime. Indeed, it may be that any attempt to express the content of the desire would fail, would not exhaust the desire (in the sense of fully speaking it), would not exactly "access the blue of it." There is something in the desire that exceeds any expression—any particular shape we offer to the desire providing only a partial manifestation of the blue—and so it would be wrong to say either that the desire contains its expression or that the expression could fully capture the desire. But at least we can say that these expressions do more or less well: it is truer to judge "I desire to stain the world this blue" than to judge "This love is sublime." Thus, the desire can *norm* its expressions, determining them as more or less true, even while it is never contained in them, nor are they contained in it.

I am trying to gesture here toward what Elena Ferrante has called "literary truth." In speaking of sincerity in literature, she claims,

> The most urgent question for a writer may seem to be, What experiences do I have as my material, what experiences do I feel able to narrate? But that's not right. The more pressing question is, What is the word, what is the rhythm of the sentence, what tone best suits the things I know? Without the right words, without long practice in putting them together, nothing comes out alive and true. It's not enough to say, as we increasingly do, These events truly happened,

> it's my real life, the names are the real ones, I'm describing the real places where the events occurred. If the writing is inadequate, it can falsify the most honest biographical truths. Literary truth is not the truth of the biographer or the reporter, it's not a pole report or a sentence handed down by a court. It's not even the plausibility of a well-constructed narrative. Literary truth is entirely a matter of wording and is directly proportional to the energy that one is able to impress on the sentence. And when it works, there is no stereotype or cliché of popular literature that resists it. It reanimates, revives, subjects everything to its needs.[39]

Ferrante distinguishes the writer's material, the experience, from the form of the expression, the words, rhythm, and tone. This distinction allows us to see that what makes the writer's expressions "alive and true" is neither the experience to be expressed (the "material"), without which the expression is empty, nor the expression, without which the experience remains cliché. It is, rather, the intimate bond of the two.[40] If we are to understand the form of grounding that occurs in expression, we must then appreciate the complexity of this grounding: the experience motivates the expression, but the expression breathes life into the experience.

Once we appreciate the complex manner in which expressions are grounded, the dichotomy of reason and causality is far less tempting. In the case of the wine drinker, the perception cannot have been a reason for the judgment, because the perception is determined only through the judgment. Of course, if, after making the judgment, the wine drinker is asked why she thinks the wine is acidic, she will reference her perception, saying, "Because it tastes acidic." The problem with this response is that it was unavailable prior to judging the wine acidic: it is only through the judgment that her perception is determined as of acidity. In this case, the response "Because it tastes acidic" is a reconstruction of the actual ground of her judgment, one possible only in light of the judgment. In taking the perception to be the reason for the judgment, one would understand the process of expression in terms of its result. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "The motivated phenomenon makes the motivating one explicit and clarifies it, such that the motivated seems to have preexisted its own motive" (*PhP*, 51). Neither can the grounding here be understood as causal. If the expression were simply caused by the perception, it would not require the labor of expression—there would be no normativity here, and so the wine drinker wouldn't need to struggle—

nor could it introduce new content into the perception. Just like reason, causality mistakes the process of expression in terms of its result; the perception has only the sort of content that could cause the judgment as a result of the process of expression. As we have seen Merleau-Ponty say, "The object only gives rise to the 'knowing event' that will transform it through the still ambiguous sense that it offers to attention as needing-to-be-determined, such that the object is the 'motive' of and not the cause of this event" (*PhP*, 33).

These conclusions are confirmed in the case of literary expression. Ferrante distinguishes the form of an expression (the proposition) from its material (the perception). In seeking to achieve truth in her statements, the author is concerned primarily with the former. There is no good way, then, to make sense of the idea that the author's judgment is grounded either causally or rationally by her experience. On the one hand, this grounding cannot be understood in terms of causality. If the grounding was causal, the writer would passively receive the expression. But understanding literary expression in terms of passivity overlooks both the writer's craft and the normativity inherent in her task—the whole negotiation between her capacities and the demands placed upon her by the experience. There would be no need for Nelson, for example, to struggle to search out the right expression for the desire. On the other hand, neither can the author's expression be grounded in terms of reason. On McDowell's model, when the writer is asked why she formed this particular judgment, she will answer, "Because I experienced it thus." But, no less than causality, this answer overlooks the author's craft, because it assimilates the expression to the experience. If Ferrante is right that the form of the expression cannot be reduced to its matter, then the writer can only say, "Because I experienced it thus," *after* having formed the expression. Expression is not formed by reason of experience; instead, it creates experience as its reason.[41] Neither reason nor causality can allow for the originality introduced by the form of the expression. Thus, we must say that the experience (as the theme or *motif* of expression) *motivates* the expression, norming the field of possible expressions without itself containing them.

What makes it so easy to think of the relation between perception and judicative expression in terms of reason and causality is that we tend to think in terms of perceptions and judgments with which we are entirely familiar. But things appear differently when we turn to original expression. Of course, not all expressions are original. Nevertheless, those that are allow us to notice something essentially true about all acts of expression, something that becomes very hard to notice when expression goes through smoothly

(just as, for example, optical illusions allow us to notice something true about all perception). I would suggest that precisely by putting the act of expression in a kind of suspension (i.e., by making it impossible for us to avail ourselves of familiar expressions), original acts of expression allow us to observe the operation underlying all expression. Analyzing these cases thus allows us to reorient the available modes for thinking about the relation between perception and judgment.

Thus, motivation, and not reason or causality, does the best job of describing the relationship between perception and judgment. To conclude this chapter, I'd like to briefly note how these considerations cut against both foundationalism and coherentism.

Consider that this alternative between causality and reason, explanation and justification, is at the heart of Davidson's coherentism as well as McDowell's brand of empiricist foundationalism. It is because Davidson can see perceptions as no more than explanations (i.e., causes) of belief, such that beliefs can be justified only by other beliefs, that he adopts a coherentist stance. On the other hand, McDowell's sort of minimal empiricist foundationalism is grounded in his belief that perceptions justify judgments. But, if my argument in this chapter has been correct, then neither of these options is acceptable. Let us briefly consider how this is so.

Foundationalists, at least of a certain stripe (e.g., McDowell), stress that the justification of a large portion of our beliefs can be traced back to certain foundational beliefs that are justified noninferentially through perception. In contrast, coherentists argue that while our perceptions do interact with our beliefs, this interaction at most explains our beliefs. If we wish, instead, to *justify* our perceptual beliefs, something more than perception is needed, namely, a coherence relation between perceptual and other beliefs. Bonjour, for example, argues that the familiar objection, that coherentists make no room for the world to influence our beliefs, "rests on a confusion between two quite different ways in which a belief may be said to be inferential (or noninferential). In the first place, there is the issue of how the belief was arrived at, of its *origin* in the thinking of the person in question. . . . In the second place, there is the issue of how the belief is *justified* or *warranted* (if at all)."[42] Only in the first sense can a belief be inferred from a perception; if we are talking about an inference in the second sense, we need to instead consider coherence relations between beliefs. In sum, the fundamental issue between coherent-

ists and foundationalists has to do with the relation between perception and perceptual beliefs: if this is a justificatory relation, then perceptual beliefs are justified and can serve to justify our other beliefs; if it is a causal relation, then perceptual beliefs are not justified in themselves, and must receive justification from their coherence with our other beliefs.

But Merleau-Ponty's description of the relation between perception and knowledge in terms of *Fundierung* differs in important respects from both of these options. Obviously, in certain respects, the Merleau-Pontian view I have been describing is quite close to the foundationalist's, for, as we have seen, it holds that perception founds all our knowledge. But in other respects, this position looks a bit like coherentism. First, it denies that we should describe the relation between perception and belief as justification; and second, it holds that perception is determined or fixed by the very knowledge it grounds. Thus, the foundational relation between perception and that knowledge is not a one-way relation, as foundationalists tend to describe it. Instead—much as coherentists think the relation between perceptual and other beliefs is a two-way relation of coherence—Merleau-Ponty thinks of the relation between perception and knowledge as a two-way relation, a *Fundierung* relation in which our judgments determine or explicate the very knowledge that grounds them. Even so, this account differs from coherentism, because the two-way relation it describes is asymmetrical; there is an essential difference between the founding and the founded members of a *Fundierung* relation. In contrast, coherence relations are symmetrical, since if *A* is coherent with *B*, then *B* is coherent with *A*. Thus, the description of the bond between perception and empirical judgment in terms of motivation resists the dichotomy of foundationalism and coherentism.

CHAPTER 4

UNIVERSAL AND A PRIORI JUDGMENTS

So far, I have accounted for perceptual knowledge—knowledge in the form of judgments about the objects of perception—through motivation. But what about other kinds of knowledge, namely, the knowledge present in universal judgments, and especially the sort of necessary universal judgments traditionally termed "a priori"? It is this kind of knowledge that I consider in the present chapter, focusing on universal and necessary knowledge, since I suppose the greater challenge is to show how this kind of knowledge could be grounded in perception.

The philosophical tradition offers two ways of thinking about this kind of knowledge and its relation to perception: rationalism and empiricism. It seems to me that in large part, Merleau-Ponty's epistemology—and the innovative potential of "motivation"—lies in its ability to overcome this classical dichotomy. And while the account I will find in Merleau-Ponty is aimed largely at the major historical motivations underlying various forms of rationalism and empiricism, the alternative he provides is hardly of merely historical interest, since we will find the same considerations underlying more contemporary debates between rationalism and empiricism. In the present chapter, then, I use motivation to show how Merleau-Ponty offers a compelling account of the relation between perception and *a priori* knowledge, that is, knowledge of universal, necessary truths.[1] What makes this account compelling, I will argue, is that it can accommodate the best insights of *both* rationalism and empiricism while avoiding the familiar problems with each.

RATIONALISM AND EMPIRICISM

In its simplest terms, the debate between rationalism and empiricism derives from the following puzzle: On the one hand, it seems that our knowledge

must be grounded in experience. If it were not, how would we distinguish the real from the imaginary? Independently of experience our beliefs are at best consistent, but not yet true. On the other hand, it is unclear whether experience *can* ground knowledge. Experience gives us access to particular and contingent facts, but not to universal or necessary truths, and much of what we count as knowledge comprises such truths. For example, I can experience any number of shapes, of any number of sizes, but I cannot experience that "all shape has extension." Since the content of knowledge differs so markedly from that of experience, it would seem that experience cannot ground knowledge.

These antinomical insights lie at the intuitive foundation of both rationalism and empiricism. The rationalist position begins from the insight that certain kinds of knowledge—universal and necessary knowledge—transcend experience, and concludes that the former cannot be founded by the latter. Such universal, necessary truths are, then, putatively a priori. Empiricism begins from the contrary insight that experience is the touchstone—and in this sense the foundation—of our knowledge.

In my view, this puzzle is genuine: there is real insight at the heart of both positions. It will not do, then, simply to deny that there are a priori truths or to insist that we have a priori truths independently of experience. Instead, we should try to find some way to accommodate the insights of both positions. I will argue that motivation allows us to do just this: only so long as we attempt to analyze the relation between experience and knowledge in terms of either reason or causality, I suggest, are these insights exclusive.

But first, let me be more precise about how I understand the two positions under consideration. The debate between rationalism and empiricism is, in my view, twofold: it is a debate about both meaning and evidence. So, in effect, we are dealing with two questions. The first concerns the relationship between perceptual meanings and the meanings constitutive of knowledge (intellectual meanings). The second concerns the relationship between perceptual evidence and the evidence requisite for knowledge (intellectual evidence). Given these two questions, we can define the empiricist position in two parts:

> E1: All intellectual content is definable in terms of experiential content.
> E2: The evidence for all knowledge is ultimately (immediately or mediately) experiential.

In contrast, the rationalist holds that experience is insufficient to license these propositions, and holds instead:

> R1: There is some intellectual content that is not definable in terms of experiential content.
> R2: There is some knowledge that, because it cannot be evidenced by experience, must be self-evident.

E1 is perhaps the core tenet of empiricism, espoused, for example, by Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke argues that we possess none of our ideas innately, and instead these ideas must all be acquired through experience, whether in the mode of sensation or reflection. More exactly, experience directly yields all our simple ideas (e.g., color, extension, succession). We are passive with respect to these ideas, and we do not choose whether or when we receive them. On the basis of these simple ideas, we can actively construct complex ideas (e.g., duration, power, substance) according to the operations of combination, comparison, and abstraction. But, while not all our ideas are directly received through experience, the only materials from which we can construct complex ideas are, ultimately, the simple ideas delivered passively in experience. For Locke, then, the operations of which the mind is capable cannot introduce any new contents: the mind cannot "have any idea which does not wholly consist of [simple ideas]."[2] This, I take it, is a way of making the point in E1: our stock meanings can be specified entirely in terms of experiential meanings.

Hume formulates a version of the second empiricist proposition—that all evidence is ultimately experiential—when he claims that we can hold no idea valid to which no impression corresponds.[3] Or, for example, the idea emerges in another way in the verificationist attitude prevalent in early twentieth-century analytic philosophy, namely, that only empirically verifiable statements are cognitively significant. These views share the thought that experience is the ultimate touchstone of our propositions, establishing some as knowledge and others as mere opinion. Without experience, we would have no means of distinguishing between the real and the imaginary, and so no means of distinguishing between true and fictitious propositions. It is experience, then, that establishes the truth-value of our propositions, in the sense that it is a condition for statements having veridical import at all.

Certainly, there is more than one way to think about evidence. In phenomenological terms, the view would be that all meaning-*fulfillment* is composed

out of experiential meaning-fulfillments; what the first empiricist proposition said of meaning-intention, the second says of meaning-fulfillment. While I will go on to explain how intellectual evidence in the phenomenological sense of this term, can be grounded by perceptual evidence, I don't think the major claims I make in this chapter are limited to a phenomenological understanding of evidence. These claims should work just as well with a broad definition of evidence, such as: *X* serves as evidence for *Y*, if *X* normatively supports belief in *Y* (I say "normatively support" here so as to leave open whether motivation or reason is the support in question). In these terms, the question is whether only experience can provide normative support for beliefs, or whether some beliefs are normatively supported independently of experience.

The rationalist position, as defined above, really consists of a denial of both empiricist propositions. R1 denies that all knowledge can be defined in terms of experiential content. The rationalist holds that there is an incommensurability between our experience and our knowledge, such that our knowledge cannot be composed out of experience. It is unclear, for example, how terms as diverse as "quark," "chiliagon," and "modus ponens" could be defined in perceptual terms. Consider the sorts of meanings to which experience is able to supply intuitive content: I cannot perceive a chiliagon (all I see is "a many-sided figure," or, indeed, I may see the figure as round) nor a universal law. Experiential content might figure in the definitions of such intellectual items, but one cannot define the latter solely in terms of operations conducted on the former. The rationalist concludes that such meanings must be innate.

R2 denies that experience is even the sort of thing that *can* serve as evidence for certain kinds of knowledge, in particular, a priori knowledge. A priori knowledge is universal and necessary, while experience is particular and contingent. As Leibniz puts it,

> Although the senses are necessary for all our actual knowledge, they are not sufficient to provide it all, since they never give us anything but instances, that is particular or singular truths. But however many instances confirm a general truth, they do not suffice to establish its universal necessity; for it does not follow that what has happened will always happen in the same way. . . . From this it appears that necessary truths, such as we find in pure mathematics and particularly in arithmetic and geometry, must have principles whose proof does not depend on instances, nor consequently on the testimony of

> the senses, even though without the senses it would never occur to us to think of them.[4]

At least some of our knowledge cannot be "established" by experience, because experience gives only instances, and instances do not suffice as reasons to hold any truth with necessity. Since some of our knowledge is necessary, it cannot derive its evidence from experience. Hume, of course, makes similar points about the insufficiency of experience to evidence many of our ideas (e.g., causal claims). But whereas Hume draws a skeptical conclusion—namely, propositions that cannot be licensed by experience are fictitious (the product of habit or sentiment)—the rationalist concludes that a priori knowledge must be self-evident.

What I want to do at this point is to undertake a survey of major obstacles to the empiricist and rationalist positions. In my view, each position faces formidable challenges, and if I can show this to be the case, then we will have strong reason to seek an alternative.

PROBLEMS WITH EMPIRICISM

Start with the empiricist position. First, I think the rationalist is simply correct that perception and the intellect are, at times, incommensurable. Many intellectual structures are not transposable into perception, and, conversely, many intellectual contents are not definable in terms of perceptual contents. Take, for example, numeracy. Again, I cannot imagine a chiliagon, nor will I perceive a pile of 1,000 toothpicks as numbering 1,000. Yet, "1,000" has a meaning for me in virtue of the intellectual structure of natural number: its place in the count sequence relative to the other numbers, which distinguishes it from 999 and 1,001. Perception can distinguish between 700 and 1,000, but not between 999 and 1,000; the intellect can draw both distinctions, and to draw the latter, it relies on a sophisticated concept of number that perception does not possess. As we will see, it would be a profound underestimation of the difficulty of acquiring the concept of "1,000" to think this concept could be defined simply in terms of operations on perceptual content (see case study 2 below). Or, perception does not yield the scientific description of time; perception presents us with distant simultaneity (presents spatially separate events as simultaneous), whereas on the scientific conception the simultaneity of distant events is relative to frames of

reference. Thus, the intellect is capable of disclosing the world in ways that perception cannot.[5]

Second, as I argued in chapter 2, the intellect has access to a genre of being that is nonperceptual: universal or ideal meanings. Plato was no doubt right, for example, that I can perceive numerous instances of equality, but not equality itself. This is not to deny that perception has general structures. Indeed, a central aim of the present chapter is to describe how perceptual structures can be leveraged into the development of intellectual structures. But perceptual structures are ways of construing the concrete world of particulars we inhabit by our bodies; perceptual structures allow us to perceive particulars and are not perceived for themselves. Thus, it remains true that one can think universals whereas one cannot perceive them.[6] The empiricist would no doubt respond that universal meanings can be explained in virtue of operations on perceptual meanings (i.e., abstraction). But, aside from numerous problems faced by theories of abstraction, I think Husserl is basically right that abstraction conflates a property as an individual moment and a property as a universal.[7] Even when we remove every distinguishing feature of a particular instance of a property—even when we abstract the property from the particular to which it belongs—it yet remains a particular instance of that property.[8]

In this way, intellectual meanings cannot be defined solely in terms of perceptual meanings, and a fortiori, neither do the latter suffice to evidence the former. For example, where I cannot perceive a pile of toothpicks as numbering 1,001, neither can my perception evidence the judgment "There are 1,001 toothpicks." To put the matter in phenomenological terms, a meaning-fulfillment cannot suffice where its meaning-intention doesn't.

PROBLEMS WITH RATIONALISM

The case I want to make against rationalism is more complex. I intend to argue that even a priori knowledge must be founded on perceptual experience, in terms of both meaning and evidence. The majority of Merleau-Ponty's argument focuses on the latter, and my exposition will follow this strategy.

Briefly, though, with regard to meaning, Merleau-Ponty thinks that every intellectual content has its meaning only in virtue of perceptual contents. For example, the scientific conception of time, incommensurable as it is with the perceptual structure of time, nevertheless has its meaning for us precisely as

a manipulation of the perceptual experience of time (cf. *PrP*, 192–97). We know what is being talked about in the scientific conception of time, only because our perceptual experience keys us into time, even if it does so in an indeterminate and inadequate manner. One might object that time could be grasped as a mere definition, without drawing on the experienced meaning of time. But even supposing this were true, the terms used in this definition would themselves have to draw a meaning from somewhere. And it seems plausible to suppose that, ultimately, these terms draw their meaning from experience itself.

Further, while Merleau-Ponty thinks the intellect is capable of intending a kind of meaning not available to perception, universal or ideal meaning, he clearly thinks that such meanings are dependent on perceptual meanings (see esp. *VI*, 108–19). The sense that universal or ideal meanings have for us is contingent upon our perceptual access to the particulars that these ideal meanings construe. The fact, for example, that I cannot perceive "equality" does not entail that this concept could have a meaning for me independently of any experience of instances of equality. Or, even if I never have the perceptual experience of a true circle, the meaning that "circle" has for me is founded on the perceptual experience of circular objects that "circle" allows me to construe.[9]

With respect to evidence, I have two points to make. First, following Merleau-Ponty, I argue that we have no absolute evidence—instead, all evidence is situated in a manner that implies we have no direct access (i.e., no access that is not mediated by perceptual evidence) to intellectual evidence. Second, I argue that rationalist accounts of intellectual evidence are necessarily obscure.

The second rationalist proposition entails that our a priori knowledge, not being grounded in experience, must be self-evident. Merleau-Ponty contests this point by arguing that intellectual evidence (just like perceptual evidence) relies on a foreground/background structure, such that any proposition can appear evident only in virtue of a background set of beliefs not simultaneously raised to explicit awareness. According to Merleau-Ponty, this entails that we have no apodictic evidence, that is, no intellectual self-evidence (see esp. *PhP*, 415–19).

When Merleau-Ponty writes that no evidence is apodictic, he means that no evidence is indubitable, or has the property of necessity. Husserl, for example, defined "apodicticity" as "absolute indubitability" or "*the absolute unimaginableness* (inconceivability) of [the state of affair's] *non-being*."[10]

There is an obvious sense in which no perceptual evidence is absolute or apodictic: in virtue of the perspectival nature of perception, we are never *fully* given the object of perception (any side seen implies a side unseen, and there is always the possibility that upon further investigation we will discover our apprehension of the perceptual object to be mistaken).[11] Much more difficult to see is how it could be that *no evidence*, including intellectual evidence, is apodictic. How, for example, could the logical truth "*A* or *not A*" be other than apodictic?

In the "Cogito" chapter, Merleau-Ponty argues that there is no certainty that cannot be doubted, claiming that "*certainty is doubt*" (*PhP*, 417). Of course, he does not mean that certainty and doubt are identical, only that they are two moments of a shared structure, the structure of evidence: the one does not exist without the other, and so there is no question of having either an absolute doubt or an absolute certainty. Nor is Merleau-Ponty claiming anything as controversial as that our most certain judgments, such as "*A* is *A*," will as a matter of fact turn out to be false, or that we have some motivation to doubt this judgment. He is simply making the much more plausible claim that every judgment is in principle open to correction. The reasoning for this claim is as follows: No judgments are self-evident. Instead, every judgment has its evidence in virtue of complex evidential systems. These evidential systems in principle leave the judgments they ground open to correction. Of course, as a matter of fact it may happen that no such correction occurs—but this does nothing to change the fact that a correction is in principle possible. Merleau-Ponty sums up the argument as follows:

> It is no accident that even evidentness can be thrown into doubt; it is because *certainty is doubt*, being the taking up of a tradition of thought that cannot condense itself into evident "truth" without my renouncing the attempt to make it explicit. An evident truth is irresistible in fact and yet always open to doubt for the very same reasons, and these are two ways of saying the same thing: it is irresistible because I take for granted a certain acquisition from experience and a certain field of thought, and precisely for this reason it appears to me as evident for a certain thinking nature whose use I enjoy and that I carry forward, but that remains contingent and given to itself. The consistency of a perceived thing, of a geometrical relation, or of an idea is only obtained if I give up the attempt to make it explicit everywhere, and if I come to rest in it. From the

> moment I have entered the game, or engaged in a certain order of thought—whether it be, for example, Euclidean space or the conditions of existence for some society—I discover evident truths, but these are not irrevocable evident truths, since perhaps this space or this society are not the only possibilities. (*PhP*, 417)

We can reformulate this argument into two main steps: (1) apodictic or absolute evidence is presuppositionless; and (2) we have no presuppositionless evidence.

Start with the first of these: apodictic evidence is presuppositionless. Suppose we embark on a project of radical doubt, intending to accept only beliefs that are beyond doubt (i.e., only apodictic beliefs). In this case, any belief that depended on presuppositions for its evidence could not be accepted by us. For by "presupposition," we mean some belief that has been taken for granted, has not been thrown into doubt. To the extent that I do not throw my presuppositions into doubt, they remain contingent: they are only possible, not yet necessary. These presuppositions, being contingent rather than necessary, leave those beliefs for which they provide evidence open to doubt. Because presuppositions are open to doubt, apodictic evidence must be presuppositionless (or, of course, grounded on a presuppositionless evidence).

Second, according to Merleau-Ponty, our experience of truth always depends on a body of presuppositions. The claim is that I can experience evidence only if, to some extent, I agree to take certain presuppositions for granted. If I did not take some presuppositions for granted, if all my presuppositions were constantly thrown into doubt, what belief of mine could remain evident? Euclidean geometry, for example, depends on a certain intuition of space (i.e., on a presupposition about space). One can derive the theorem that the interior angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles only through a construction presupposing the parallel postulate.[12] As long as this presupposition is not interrogated, the evidence for the theorem is irresistible; its evidence appears apodictic. However, when it is revealed that Euclidean space is "contingent" (i.e., only one possible space), the theorem loses this apodictic evidence: it is true only for particular kinds of space. We experience the evidence possessed by Euclidean geometry as *certain*, then, only to the extent that we agree to leave some set of presuppositions out of question (e.g., the parallel postulate).[13]

More generally, presuppositions are unthematized or implicit grounds. If grounds are thematized, they can be either affirmed or denied on the basis of

justification (i.e., they can be treated as reasons). But, as I argued in chapter 1, as long as grounds are unthematized, they can't properly count as reasons, only as motives. This is not to say that our knowledge cannot at all be grounded in reason—indeed, it usually is—only that it can never be fully so grounded. Merleau-Ponty's claim, then, is that all of our truths are at least partially grounded not in virtue of reason, but in virtue of motivation. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "There are truths just as there are perceptions: not that we could ever fully lay out before ourselves the reasons for any affirmation—there are only motives" (*PhP*, 415). Evidence is *motivated*, in part by our past experiences. And these unthematized motives are the situation within which we experience evidence. Merleau-Ponty writes, "We possess a truth, this experience of truth would only be absolute knowledge if we could thematize all of its motives, that is, if we ceased being situated" (*PhP*, 416). This "situation" names the set of presuppositions on which our truths or evidence depend: when I perceive or when I have evidence, my past evidences contract into a background against which the new evidence can appear. So, evidence is always situated. If, for example, I find an expert trustworthy, I will take her testimony as good evidence. Or, if I have bad hearing, I may not instinctively trust my sense of where a noise comes from. This is not just to say that we interpret our experience, but that experience *evidentiates* judgments only through the mediation of an evidential situation or context. At the most basic level, experience *can* evidentiate judgments only if I have a primordial faith in the contact of perceptual experience with a world: if I were to become disoriented and lose my spontaneous belief in perception, then the latter would no longer bear evidential weight.[14]

To be clear, Merleau-Ponty's view is that this is not merely a matter of practical limitations—that judgments are at times, excusably, made hastily. Instead, it is an essential necessity that judgments rest on certain presuppositions: if anything is to appear certain to me, it will do so because I "give up the attempt to make it explicit everywhere" and "come to rest in it." The structure of certainty is such that whatever appears to me as certain does so against a background of uninterrogated beliefs. Wittgenstein makes a similar argument in *On Certainty* when he writes that if I wish to test a conviction, I can do so only by putting certain other convictions out of question (e.g., I must trust the apparatus by which I perform the experiment or the subject on which I experiment).[15] As Wittgenstein puts it, "If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put."[16] In other words, if some belief of mine is to change, then some other must remain constant. Take again the example that I walk

along the shore and discover that what I thought was a row of birches is in fact a shipwreck. This change in convictions presupposes my belief that I am seeing the world as it is, that I am not possessed by a hallucination in which a row of birches can transform themselves into a shipwreck; I say, "It was always a shipwreck, a fact to which I was blind," and not "By some magic, the birches have become a shipwreck." In this case, my belief in the world is the hinge upon which turns the belief about what it is that I see. Every judgment, then, demands that something hold fast, and for this reason Wittgenstein concludes that "justification comes to an end."[17]

Let this suffice as an argument for the position that all our evidence depends on presuppositions.[18] Given these two steps (that apodictic evidence is presuppositionless and that our evidence is never presuppositionless), Merleau-Ponty is licensed to conclude that evidence is never apodictic. The fact that we have no infallible self-evidence is a considerable blow to traditional formulations of rationalism. Still, by itself this argument does not provide me with the conclusion I intend to reach, namely, that all knowledge depends on experience. For one might think that some knowledge is justified independently of experience but is not therefore infallible. Bonjour, for example, has defended such a position. So, to make room for the Merleau-Pontian account I want to provide, I need to consider this more contemporary form of rationalism.

MODERATE RATIONALISM

In his *In Defense of Pure Reason*, Bonjour defends what he terms a "moderate" rationalist position.[19] Like the classical rationalists (and, indeed, many classical empiricists), Bonjour maintains that we have two sources of justification. Some of our knowledge is justified *a posteriori*, by appeal to experience. And some of our knowledge is justified *a priori*, by appeal to reason alone, independently of experience. Bonjour differs from the classical rationalists, however, in holding that rational insight—that in virtue of which some knowledge is justified a priori—is fallible. Bonjour claims that nothing about the idea of experience-independent insight necessarily implies infallibility, and we seem to have sufficient evidence to conclude that rational insight is fallible.[20]

Bonjour provides three main arguments for holding that there is a priori justification.[21] First, Bonjour appeals to putative examples of knowledge that could only be justified a priori (e.g., "Nothing can be red all over and green all over at the same time"; "If a certain person A is taller than a second person B

and person B is taller than a third person C, then person A is taller than person C"; "There are no round squares"; and "Either David or Jennifer ate the cake, but Jennifer did not eat it. Therefore, David did.") Propositions of this sort seem not to be evidenced by experience, but to be intuitively self-evident. Bonjour argues that such propositions are apprehended in acts of rational insight (i.e., in a way that is both direct, immediate, nondiscursive, *and* intellectual or reason-governed). It is this rational insight that justifies one in believing such propositions to be true.

Bonjour's second and third arguments claim that the denial of a priori justification implies an extreme skepticism. The second argument does this by pointing out that empirical justification itself depends on rational insight. This is because the contents of experience are particular and are limited by the narrow scope of what we can observe. But we hold many beliefs that exceed the scope of perceptual experience—beliefs about the past, the future, unobserved particulars, and, not least, general claims. Inferences from experiential beliefs to nonexperiential beliefs are either valid—in which case they depend on rules of inference *that cannot themselves be inferred from experience*, because they are conditions for such inferences—or invalid, in which case we are left with a severe form of skepticism.

Bonjour's third argument generalizes this result, claiming that *any* argument depends on some a priori justification. All arguments involve an inference from some premises to a conclusion. We hold inferences to be valid when we have a reason to think that the conclusion is true if the premises are true. But reasons for holding inferences valid cannot involve appeals to experience. Suppose one were to justify an inference in this manner. The experience to which one appealed could itself be formulated as a premise, in which case either the conclusion is explicitly included in the premises, and so no inference is necessary, or it is not, in which case the inference goes beyond what can be derived from experience. Consequently, one must adopt either some form of rationalism or else an extreme skepticism that denies there are valid arguments. Rejecting the skeptical position, Bonjour holds that we have some capacity for a priori justification.

Empiricists often reply by pointing out ways in which we can explain purportedly a priori knowledge without resorting to a priori justification.[22] But the main objection to Bonjour's view is that it is too obscure. How is it that we are able to perform a cognitive act that gives us immediate access to necessary truths?[23] While there is question enough about how we are able to have direct access to individuals in perception, there is at least some understanding that

this involves a story about sensation, embodiment, and the organization of sensation into meaningful wholes. No analogous story is told about rational insight; it is only claimed that we must have such insight.

While this objection is not decisive, it is, I think, compelling. On the one hand, it seems to me that Bonjour's description of a "rational insight" has a phenomenological weight that must be acknowledged. In the examples that Bonjour considers, we do apparently have direct insight into the truth of certain propositions, and this insight is not perceptual but rational. Thus, he is right to say that in such cases, from an "intuitive" standpoint, "When I carefully and reflectively consider the proposition (or inference) in question, I am able simply to see or grasp or apprehend that the proposition is *necessary*, that it must be true in any possible world or situation. . . . Such a rational insight, as I have chosen to call it, does not seem in general to depend on any particular sort of criterion or on any further discursive or ratiocinative process, but is instead direct and immediate."[24] And, indeed, something like this experience of *simply* having rational insight is implied by Merleau-Ponty's insistence that intellectual evidence is not reducible to perceptual evidence; we do have the experience of a kind of evidence that is not directly furnished by particular perceptions.[25]

But, on the other hand, the empiricist is right that the rationalist account of "rational insight" (or what I have called, in a phenomenological vein, "intellectual evidence") is obscure: phenomenologically, this description of the experience of insight is inadequate. I would suggest that this is because, as intellectualist analyses are prone to do, it overlooks the internal relation between a foreground and its background. Every foreground, while it presents itself as immediately and directly accessible, is mediated by the background that it stands out against (e.g., tone is perceived in virtue of keynote, color in virtue of lighting). As we saw Merleau-Ponty argue above, the same is true of rational insight. Rational insight presents itself as immediate to a cursory glance, but in fact it can appear as it does only in virtue of a background of sedimented truths, which we have here specified ultimately as those of perception. Bonjour is right that rational insight *seems* to be direct and immediate, but only in the manner that the experience of color *seems* to be immediate—under a careful phenomenological eye, we discover color perception to be mediated by lighting. Further, I would agree with Bonjour that rational insight does not depend on any discursive or ratiocinative process. Rational insight is, in this sense, a starting point for reasoning and justification, not itself originating from justification by some further belief. But this

presupposes that the only relevant mediation is ratiocination (i.e., justification). Merleau-Ponty would point out that this is simply not true: rational evidence, its character of *insight*, of making a normative demand on us, is itself motivated by a background evidential system, rooted ultimately in perceptual experience.

As long as the rationalist does not acknowledge this background, the empiricist is right that the idea of a priori justification is obscure; if we train our eye only on the foreground of rational insight, and observe only the level of justification, we simply cannot account for the *evidence* characteristic of rational insight. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, the "experience of rationality is lost when we take it for granted as self-evident" (*PrP*, 25). In contrast, it seems to me that phenomenology can provide a relatively clear account of rational insight by describing it as situated within a background evidential situation.

I don't want to wade too far into this phenomenological account now—my purpose at this juncture is just to suggest that it can provide a less obscure account of rational evidence than does rationalism. So, it might be helpful briefly to sketch out this phenomenological alternative. To do so concisely, I will rely on Husserl's description, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, of a hierarchy of evidence running from pre-predicative experience to a priori judgments. While I'm not convinced that my Merleau-Pontian account should be committed to every aspect of Husserl's description, the latter will at least prove very helpful in outlining a phenomenological alternative to the rationalist's account of intellectual evidence.

Husserl's view is, very basically, as follows: Intellectual meanings are expressed in judgments. Judgments can be either empirical (about particular objects of experience) or universal (about universal objects that cannot be directly experienced). Universal judgments can be material (i.e., have experiential content) or formal (have no experiential content). We can show that each of these three types of judgment—empirical, material universal, or formal universal—has its evidence in virtue of perception.[26]

1. Individual Judgments

There is an obvious sense in which individual judgments, or judgments of experience, depend upon experience for their evidence. Such judgments include a reference to empirically given particulars within themselves, and so one can't fulfill the judgment without fulfilling an intention of the individual. Just how this dependence is supposed to work was the subject of chapter 3.

2. Material Universal Judgments

Material universals include some material content, that is, content garnered from experience, such as, "Every sound has tone." According to Husserl, such universals rely on experience for their evidence. Husserl writes: "Every A Priori with a material content . . . demands a return to *intuition* of individual examples—that is: to '*possible*' *experience*—if criticism is to bring about genuine evidence."[27] For example, the proposition that "every sound has a tone" is universal and necessary (it is an a priori truth), but material insofar as it has sensuous content (it refers to sound, which is not a logical category).[28] At the same time, such a proposition can be fulfilled only through experience—without the possibility of sonorous experience, the proposition would be a set of empty significations. Obviously, no *particular* experience can establish the necessity of this proposition. But it is not the individual per se that fulfills the judgment. Rather, the individual *as an exemplar* fulfills it. If I grasp the noise penetrating my apartment from the road, I can freely vary its tone or pitch in my imagination. However, I find that I cannot imagine it as a sound that has *no* tone. Such a sound would not sound—it would be no sound. On the basis of this *individual as exemplar*, then, I fulfill the judgment that "every sound has a tone."

3. Formal Universal Judgments

Formal universals, such as the laws of logic, don't include any material content. Instead, they have purely categorial content. It might seem, then, that there is no clear sense in which such universals would demand supplementation by experience in order to have evidence: whereas material universals must ultimately be fulfilled through experience, formal universals can be fulfilled through any example of categorialia (any judgment). But, as we have seen, Husserl argues that the other two types of categorialia (individual or material universal judgment) are themselves fulfilled on the basis of experience. Thus, formal universals are mediately founded upon experienced individuals—insofar as they are founded on categorialia, which are founded on experience. Husserl writes,

> *The sense-relation of all categorial meanings* to something individual, that is, on the noetic side, to evidences of individuals, to *experiences*,—a relation growing out of their sense-genesis and present in every example that could be used by formal analytics—surely *cannot be insignificant for the sense and the possible evidence of the*

> *laws of analytics*, including the highest ones, the principles of logic. Otherwise, how could those laws claim *formal-ontological* validity: united with their validity for every possible predicative truth, validity for *everything conceivably existing*? This conceivability surely signifies a possibility of evidence, which leads back ultimately, even though with formal universality, to a possible individual something or other and, correlatively, to a possible experience.[29]

This account, while obviously only schematic, allows us to see how intellectual evidences can be founded on perceptual ones. So, phenomenology can provide a relatively clear account of intellectual evidence by founding it on perception. This, of course, is not a decisive argument against moderate rationalism, but it does give us a strong motive to provide such a phenomenological account.[30]

I have one final point to make with respect to Bonjour's moderate rationalism. Part of the appeal of Bonjour's position—what makes the appearance of immediacy so tempting—is that all of his examples are deeply sedimented truths. Because they are so familiar, they present themselves with the character of self-evidence. This appearance dissolves, however, when we attend to the *acquisition* of an a priori insight. Take Wertheimer's example of how a child discovers the formula for the area of a parallelogram.[31]

Suppose a child has learned the formula for calculating the area of a rectangle, but is at a loss when asked to calculate the area of a nonrectangular parallelogram. Wertheimer describes various methods by which children proceed, all involving manipulation of perceptual structures and their knowledge of the formula for rectangles. In one method, a child first sees the parallelogram as a rectangle with a triangle protruding from either end. Second, the child reorients this figure, seeing the triangle on one side as a protrusion and the triangle on the other end as corresponding to a gap (as a rectangle with a triangular piece missing). The child then sees that the gap can be filled in with the triangular protrusion at the other end, such that the parallelogram can be transformed into a rectangle (see fig. 4.1). The child concludes that the area of a parallelogram is computed with the same formula as the area for a rectangle. The child now has this formula readily available and with time may come to think of the area of the parallelogram as an obvious truth. But any such pretension to immediacy would be belied by the child's initial situation, in which the formula is nowhere to be found. Of course, the child can be simply told that the relevant formula for a parallelogram is "Area equals width

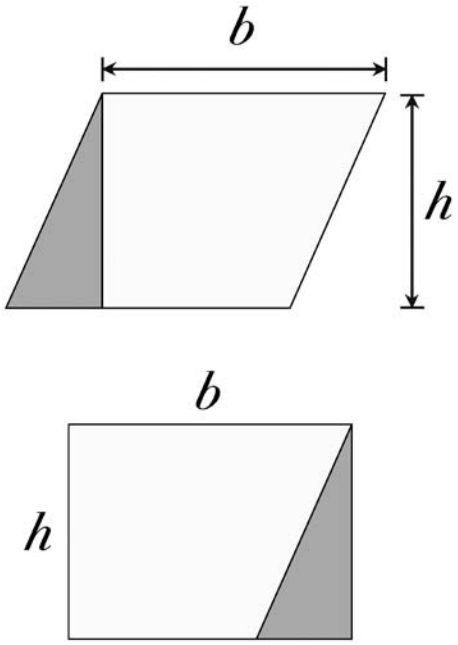

FIGURE 4.1. Area of a parallelogram. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

times height." But the child only has rational *insight* into the truth of this formula—the formula has meaning or evidence only if it is *seen* (intuited) in the rearrangement of the perceptual structure of the parallelogram.

We are able to extend this analysis back to Bonjour's examples. Even though nothing could be more obvious than the transitivity of height to us, let us try not simply to assume that the child is able immediately to see that from the facts that A is taller than B, and B is taller than C, that it follows that A is taller than C. How will the child arrive at this insight about the transitivity of height, then? If she puts A, B, and C before her vision (or imagination), she will be able perceptually to observe that A is indeed taller than C. But this is a mere fact: she does not yet see the structural *necessity* involved in transitivity. But she can arrive at this necessity if she now tries to vary the height of these figures in imagination. She supposes that C is in fact very tall, expanding C in her imagination to be taller than A, while intending to leave A taller than B and B taller than C. If we assume that she has not yet had insight into the transitivity of height, there is nothing contradictory in this supposition. A contradiction results only if we presuppose transitivity: we note that if B is taller than C, and C is taller than A, then B must be taller than A, but this

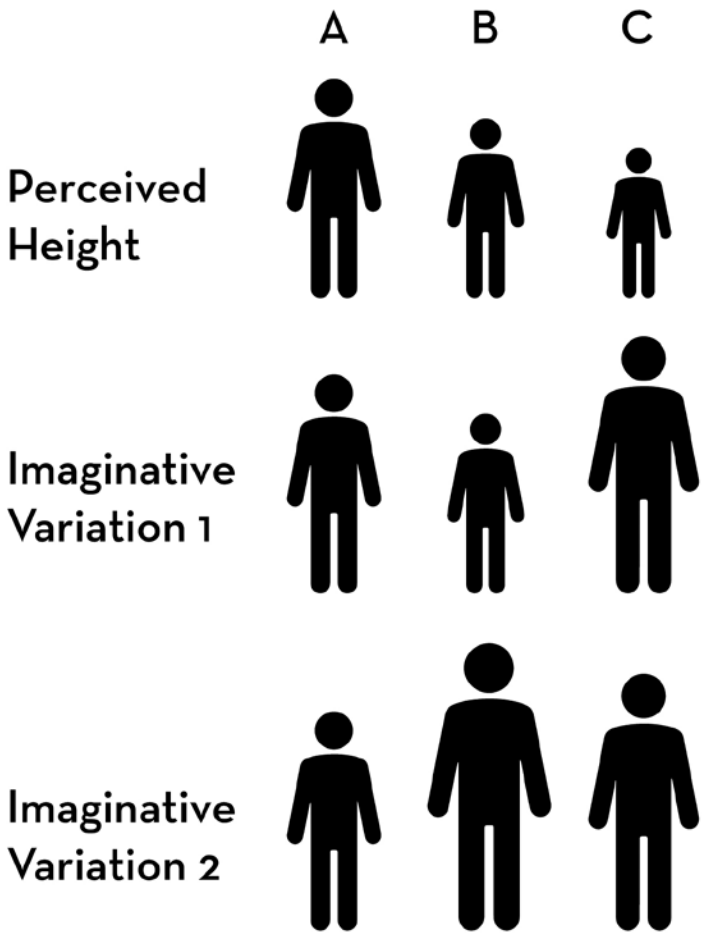

FIGURE 4.2. Transitivity of height. Credit Janet Antich.

contradicts the first supposed premise, that A is taller than B. But, again, this contradiction results only if transitivity is presupposed, and therefore cannot justify transitivity. In contrast, the child's imaginative supposition makes the contradiction immediately evident (see fig. 4.2). If the child tries to imagine C taller than A, then she can see that C will be taller than B, and this contradicts her suppositions. Perhaps she tries to fix this by now expanding the size of B in her imagination, so it is taller than C. But if she does this, then B will be taller than A, and this contradicts her presuppositions. In this way, she acquires insight into a *perceptual* structure: that height is transitive. Henceforth, the insight will present itself as an immediate rational insight. But it was not there

in her original perceptual situation, nor in the original meaning of height, for, as we saw, if she attempted to derive transitivity from a proof by contradiction, she could do so only by presupposing transitivity. The insight is therefore not arrived at by a logical arrangement of significations, but by insight into a perceptual structure, arrived at through the manipulation of a perceptual situation. The rationalist analysis, which attends only to the rational insight, is indeed obscure, for it leaves veiled the sedimented perceptual structure that supports the rational insight. This kind of phenomenological analysis of the cases in question—in effect, an application of the general phenomenological analysis of evidence borrowed from Husserl above—succeeds in removing the obscurity of rational insight, precisely by removing its immediacy.

Bonjour would no doubt object that, for denying the immediacy of rational insight, a position like mine results in skepticism. According to Bonjour, if we do not have immediate insight into the rules for validly inferring from perception to knowledge, or more generally from premises to conclusions, then none of our knowledge is justified. For if these rules are not justified immediately, they will themselves be derived from experience, but, being the rules for justified inference from experience, will not themselves be justified. And if these rules are not justified, nothing derived by them will be justified. I think this objection may well be devastating for the empiricist picture: if there are no such rules known a priori, there is no way that our knowledge can be *justified* by experience. But this criticism is already acknowledged and accepted in Merleau-Ponty's claim that our knowledge is ultimately supported not by reasons, but by motives (*PhP*, 415–16). Bonjour's rationalism simply assumes that the only normative relation between beliefs is reason. But this assumption is false: I have argued that motivation is a normative relation. Moreover, as I will further argue in the following, it is a property of motivation that its output can transcend its input, and so it can move from the contingent to the necessary, from the a posteriori to the a priori. In the manner we saw above, the contingent grasp of the heights of three individuals can motivate a structural insight. Because Bonjour does not see motivation as a possible ground for the rules of inference, he does not see how justification can arise out of our initially unjustified access to the world. Certainly, on my picture, there is no apodictic justification: our beliefs are always situated, and in virtue of this situation they are open to revision. But neither is there *apodictic* justification on Bonjour's moderate rationalism, which allows for fallibility.

Again, I suspect Bonjour is right that if there is no a priori insight into the rules of inference, then experience cannot justify items of knowledge:

experience would first have to justify the rules of inference, but then one would ask what rules it used to infer these rules. There is no such problem, however, if we think that experience motivates knowledge, since motivation does not operate on a set of justificatory rules. Motivation names a spontaneous alertness to norms, one that, as we have seen, precedes the sphere of justification. On the contrary, even the formal a priori judgments we make about rules of inference should be seen as grounded on perceptual experience. That is, not only can motivation operate without such rules, it grounds them, carving out the space of justifications. Thus, my position does not culminate in skepticism; it simply denies an untenable account of evidence, which the empiricist and the rationalist share.[32]

So, both rationalism and empiricism face significant obstacles. Such considerations as I have provided here will perhaps not decisively rule out these positions, but they do license us to seek an alternative account of the relation between perception and knowledge. Neither rationalism nor empiricism is able to avoid the antinomy with which we began: on the one hand, the rationalist is right that there is incommensurability between knowledge and perception; on the other, the empiricist is right that our knowledge is not self-grounding and must be grounded in experience. The foregoing considerations have made clear that this antinomy derives from genuine insights, and neither rationalism nor empiricism is prepared to resolve it. We should seek, then, a new account, one that accommodates both sides of this antinomy. As I will now argue, motivation enables us to do just this.

MOTIVATION AS A GROUND OF KNOWLEDGE

We can sum up the account of knowledge I have been describing over the past chapters in the following two propositions:

> M1: All intellectual content is motivated by experiential content.
> M2: The evidence for all knowledge (rational or intellectual evidence) is ultimately (immediately or mediately) motivated by experiential evidence.

I take it that chapter 2 already familiarized the reader with the meaning of these two propositions.[33] What I want to show in this chapter is that, in virtue of its unique properties, motivation is positioned to accommodate the

best insights of both empiricism and rationalism: motivation allows us to see how (a) perception founds knowledge, while at the same time, (b) knowledge transcends perception.

Motivation accommodates the rationalist point that there is incommensurability between experience and knowledge, because *motivata* transcend their motives in the sense that the former are not definable in terms of the latter. I argued above that intellectual meanings are often not translatable into perceptual meanings, for example, because perceptual meanings can contain an indeterminacy that prevents any one-to-one correspondence between perceptual and intellectual meanings: as we saw in chapter 2, the perceptual meaning of air is ambiguously something and nothing, and this ambiguous kind of substance does not translate into either of the scientific meanings "gas" or "void." As Merleau-Ponty puts it, in the transition to knowledge, "we are dealing with a transcendence and not a static identity, and here . . . truth is not an adequation but anticipation, repetition, and slippage of meaning. Truth allows itself to be reached only through a sort of distance. The thing thought is not the thing perceived. Knowledge is not perception" (*PrW*, 129). But, as described in chapter 1, it lies in the nature of motivation that a *motivatum* can transcend its motive. Thus, the claim that perception motivates knowledge is perfectly compatible with the claim that knowledge transcends perception.[34]

At the same time, motivation accommodates the empiricist point that knowledge is grounded in experience. Motivation, as we've seen, is a kind of epistemic ground, and so claiming that motivation names the bond between perception and knowledge is a way of meeting the empiricist insight that knowledge is founded in experience.

Some clarifications need to be made to this general scheme. First, note that the rationalist also thinks, albeit in a quite different sense, that experience is a necessary condition for knowledge. As a matter of fact, says the rationalist, knowledge would not arise in the course of human life without experience. But there is no *principled* reliance of knowledge on perception, and so experience serves only as an *occasion* for knowledge's arising (e.g., as triggering certain meanings or cognitions). On this view, knowledge may de facto rely on perception for its existence, but this is merely a contingent fact about human psychology. If this is so, then empiricism is wrong that knowledge is founded on perception in any important sense, and we would return to the empiricist-rationalist antinomy. But motivation resists this conclusion, since, as I argued in chapter 1, motivation is an internal relation. Given the

definition of internal relation provided there, perception cannot be a mere *occasioning* ground for knowledge, since knowledge owes its meaning (and not just its existence) to the former—motivation is a *Fundierung* relation, and foundations are not mere occasions.[35]

The key to accommodating the core insights of both rationalism and empiricism, then, is to analyze the relation between perception and knowledge in terms of a mode of epistemic grounding that allows perception to ground the very knowledge that transcends it. Motivation does just this. More, it *can* do this precisely because it doesn't describe the relation between experience and knowledge in terms of causality and reason, explanation and justification, since it's not clear how either explanation or justification could get the incommensurability of knowledge and perception into view. In terms of causality, there is no readily available means for describing how a cause can ground an item that transcends it. In our most familiar examples of causality (e.g., the motion of one billiard ball causing that of another), there is no transition between different levels: the motion of the one translates readily into the motion of the other. This, I think, is more or less the problem that Benacerraf has pointed out for abstract, and in particular mathematical, knowledge, given a causal account of knowledge—it's far from clear how such knowledge can be causally grounded at all.[36] In terms of justification, I don't see how one type of meaning can be said to justify another if the two are not intertranslatable. One meaning cannot serve in a reason for another when there is a failure of translation between the two. Attempts to reason in this manner result in fallacies of equivocation. And there is an additional, more complex issue here for the justification view: if the very rules of reasoning are founded in perception (as Husserl argues in stating that formal a priori truths are evidenced by perception), then perception cannot *primarily* be related to our knowledge in the mode of reason.

Indeed, it seems likely to me that what mires the debate between rationalism and empiricism is precisely that they approach the relation between perception and knowledge in terms of reason or causality. The empiricist view points out, correctly, that experience must ground knowledge in some manner, but having only the terms of reason or causality with which to describe this grounding, it inevitably falls prey to the rationalist objection that experience and knowledge are incommensurable. There is, then, ample reason to pursue a motivation-based account of knowledge, insofar as it accommodates the best insights of both rationalism and empiricism, allowing us to see how perception can ground the very knowledge that transcends it.

OBJECTIONS

Still, a motivation-based account faces challenges of its own. I'll discuss two of these here, one from the empiricist camp and one from the rationalist. The empiricist challenge derives from Hume's claim that any idea of which we have no impression is indistinguishable from fiction. But we have no perceptual impression of much of our knowledge, because knowledge transcends perception. On the other hand, the rationalist holds that perceptual experience is simply insufficient to ground a priori knowledge. Clearly, if my account is going to work, it needs to meet these two challenges. I will now contest the two claims at the core of these challenges, by arguing that (a) the contingent can ground the necessary; and (b) knowledge can transcend its ground without being indistinguishable from fiction.

Start with the rationalist objection. Rationalists argue that perceptual experience cannot ground knowledge, because perceptual experience is contingent whereas knowledge is necessary; there is an ontological difference between the content of experience and the content of knowledge that makes the former unsuitable to ground the latter. If this were true, then my motivational account would be erroneous. And, so far, I have adopted part of this line of thinking: knowledge really does transcend perception, in part because knowledge is marked by a necessity that perception lacks. But the rationalist is wrong to think that this leaves experience unable to ground knowledge: it's true that the contingent cannot *justify* the necessary, but the former can ground the latter, namely, in the manner of motivation.

We can appreciate this point by noting that the rationalist challenge, as I have put it, harbors an ambiguity. The term "necessary knowledge" can mean either (a) knowledge of a *proposition* that *is to hold necessarily*; or (b) knowledge that is *known with necessity*. In the first case, the necessity is a quality of the intended proposition (the object). In the second, it is a quality of the knowledge itself (the act). This distinction allows me to make two points.

First, Leibniz's argument considered in the section above titled "Rationalism and Empiricism" shows only that perceptual evidence cannot establish necessary knowledge in the second sense. But this is no threat to perception's ability to ground knowledge. We have already seen Merleau-Ponty argue not only that perception cannot establish knowledge necessary in the second sense, but that *there is no such knowledge*. So, this consequence will hardly seem a threat to the position I am describing.

Second, the fact that perception cannot establish knowledge with necessity does not mean that it cannot establish knowledge that *is to hold* with necessity: particular experiences *can* motivate knowledge that is *intended as* universal and necessary. The first time I see an egret, for example, I might, on the basis of this particular example, already form the idea that all egrets look this way (e.g., have such a coloration). Of course, I might at a future date discover this idea to be false—there are other kinds of egrets, and so the coloration was not as universal as I supposed. Nevertheless, what I *intended* with this idea was not the particular (this one egret), but the general (the species). Further, it was just this particular experience that grounded my intention of the general such that we can justly say that in this case, the particular motivates a generality that cannot be deduced from it.

In fact, both empiricism and rationalism misconstrue the relation between the perception of a particular fact and the intellection of a universal essence. Leibniz's argument for the insufficiency of experience to establish universal truths joins up with Hume's critique of causality in sharing a false idea of induction. In "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man," Merleau-Ponty argues against an empiricist conception of induction as "a process by which, in considering a group of facts, we discover a common character and set it apart by abstraction" (*PrP*, 68). We do not start from a set of isolated particulars and then abstract a common character that is already *contained in* each. Merleau-Ponty adduces as evidence against this conception the process by which Galileo arrived at his account of falling bodies. As we'll consider in greater detail shortly (see case study 3), Galileo could not have proceeded by abstracting a common character found in various experiences of falling bodies, because his conception starts from the pure case of a freely falling body, of which we have no experience (every falling body that we experience is affected by factors such as wind resistance). Thus, "the conception of the fall of bodies which guides his experiment is not found in the facts. He forms it actively; he constructs it" (*PrP*, 69). Having constructed the pure case of the freely falling body, Galileo can then explain the "confused facts" through the introduction of additional considerations (e.g., resistance). Galileo's law is not contained in or derived from particular cases; it is creative, original. And yet it is only such cases that can serve to motivate Galileo's construction, through the meanings they make available and the problems they pose.

To put the argument in other terms, we do not derive a universal connection from a set of distinct particular connections, as follows:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} A_1 \rightarrow B_1 \\ A_2 \rightarrow B_2 \\ \cdots \\ A_n \rightarrow B_n \end{array}}{A \rightarrow B}$$

Instead, with the experience "$A_1 \rightarrow B_1$" there may already be initiation into the insight "$A \rightarrow B$." Each further experience gives evidential weight to this universal (or else contradicts it). It's not that I build up the general out of particulars; on the contrary, the general can be vaguely present with the first particular and each particular evidentiates it further. As Husserl puts it, "It is *from this* that Hume ought to have started, from self-evidence: the fact that in circumstances *U*, a *W* appears, *in and of itself already* lends something like weight to the assertion 'In general, in circumstances *U*, *W* appears'; and this weight increases with the number of cases experienced."[37] On this conception, the universal is neither caused (i.e., abstracted from impressions) nor justified (i.e., deduced from the particulars). It is instead evidenced in each particular experience. The knowledge of such a universal will not be necessary in the sense of being known with necessity, but such a universal is always evidenced precisely *as necessary* (is intended as necessary). This, as Husserl puts it in the same passage, is "the motivating power of experience."[38] In this manner, the concept of motivation allows us to accept the arguments against empiricism proposed by Hume and Leibniz without accepting their conclusions. Hume, holding that we have some ideas that cannot be caused by the world in perception, draws the skeptical conclusion that such ideas are mere fictions; Leibniz, holding that we have some knowledge that cannot be justified by perception, draws the rationalist conclusion that we have innate knowledge. Merleau-Ponty claims instead that perception motivates the intellect's grasp of it, and thus grounds beyond what it contains.

Consider now the empiricist concern: Hume claims that we should hold no idea valid of which we have no impression. Because we have no impression of many of our ideas—personal identity, substance, necessary connection (causality)—Hume concluded that these ideas are fictions, grounded in habit and sentiment. In other words, Hume concluded that because these ideas are not produced in us by causal impacts of the world on our senses, they must be produced by the imagination. Hume thus reaches a skeptical position regarding these ideas.

The core of the challenge is that, to the extent that an idea or proposition exceeds its ground, it is a mere fiction. Motivation allows us to see how this

claim is false. As I described in chapter 1, a motive delimits and norms a field of possible responses to it. These responses are not contained in the motive; instead, they transcend the motive. But they are normed by the very motive they transcend. The input of motivation grounds the output, even while the output transcends the input. There is a kernel of truth to Hume's invocation of "fiction" and "imagination" here, because motivation is creative in the sense that it engenders an original product. But "fiction" doesn't capture the process of motivation, because describing our knowledge as fictitious suggests that it isn't responsible to reality, whereas describing our knowledge as motivated suggests that it is. Our knowledge is *normed* by experience, and this means that it is responsible to that experience; knowledge has a different kind of purport than fiction.

CASE STUDIES

To conclude this chapter, I would like to consider a few case studies that I think bear out the general analysis I have suggested: my argument does not hinge on these examples, but they should provide phenomenological depth to the account I have proposed. In each case, my goal will be to show how a perceptual structure founds an intellectual structure that transcends it, while nevertheless being grounded in it. I'll begin with two case studies concerning the development of intellectual systems from perceptual systems within an individual's life span.

Case Study One: Weight/Heft

Consider, first, Wiser and Smith's recent research on science education, which has explored the most effective means of encouraging conceptual change from children's initial conceptual system to the scientific conceptual system.[39] Take one example: children have an undifferentiated concept of weight/heft. That is, children understand weight in terms of heft, resulting in incorrect beliefs (e.g., that very small objects have no weight). This engenders a contradiction, because very small objects have no heft independently of each other but do when added together: a grain of rice has no heft, but a bag of rice does. The child recognizes that no amount of null weight objects can sum to an object having weight, but is unsure how to resolve the problem. The scientific conceptual system resolves such issues by discriminating between weight and heft, determining the latter as an imperfect mode of access to the former:

small objects have a weight that perception cannot observe, since all mass has weight. In other words, knowledge resolves the contradiction present in perception by transitioning to a new and more determinate conceptual system, which results in a greater degree of stability. This scientific concept of weight significantly transcends the perceptual concept of weight. It enlarges the domain in which this concept applies, holding that all mass has weight, but also understands weight in terms that are unavailable to perception, defining weight as a measure of force exerted by gravity. But this concept of weight has no intrinsic evidence or meaning for the child. The problem, then, is how to move the child from his initial conceptual system to the scientific one. And the difficulty is that the child has no stock of meanings or evidence other than those available to perception with which to transcend the perceptual concept system for the scientific one.

Wiser, Smith, and Doubler outline a series of stepping-stones that allow the child gradually to reconfigure their conceptual system.[40] An initial step is to get children to believe that scales are more accurate measures of weight than hands. The child can easily see that objects affect scales according to their heft: a heftier object has a greater effect on the scale. And yet this belief conflicts with evidence available to the child. For example, it may occur that of two objects, which for the child have the same heft, one has a greater effect on the scale. So, the child learns that scales are more *sensitive* than hands. The child can also learn that the scale is more *reliable* than hands: her peers may report all different degrees of heft, whereas the scale is constant. A second step is to develop a concept of scale weight. Initially, objects can be qualitatively sorted by their relative effect on the scale. Subsequently they can be sorted quantitatively, by introducing units. The language used with the child to describe measurement serves to "scaffold" conceptual change: from "The Playdoh cube is as heavy as five teddy bears," to "The weight of the cube is the same as the weight of five teddy bears," to "The weight of the cube is five teddy bears," to "The weight of the cube is 25 grams."[41] The child now has access to an *extensive* concept of weight (i.e., that the weight of the whole is composed of the weight of the parts), through which a child can learn that all mass has weight (e.g., by a thought experiment in which the child continuously halves a weight—if the weight of the whole is composed of the weight of the parts, the mass can be divided indefinitely and each part should still have weight).

Of course, more steps are required to obtain the full scientific concept of weight. But the important fact, for us, is the complexity of the conceptual

manipulation involved in this process. There is no question here of the child acquiring the scientific concept of weight directly from her initial stock of perceptual meanings. But neither is the scientific concept of weight independent of those perceptual meanings. Of course, one *could* train a child to operate perfectly correctly with the scientific concept of weight without her understanding it at all: one can understand the formal relations of the propositions "Weight is the measure of force exerted by gravity"; "Gravity is a force of attraction between masses"; "Mass is the amount of matter in an object"; and "Matter is a substance that takes up space" without understanding their meaning or having any insight into their truth. But such propositions have a *meaning* only insofar as the perceptual concept system can be gradually manipulated or reorganized into the scientific concept system, and they are *evident* only insofar as perceptual evidence (through the contradictions it poses) requires this reorganization.

The undifferentiated concept of weight/heft is incommensurable with the adult concept: from the adult perspective, it is simply confused. But at the same time, weight has its meaning only as a determination or differentiation of the weight/heft structure. The child's grasp of weight is indeed contingent: from the scientific perspective, it is a merely subjective, and in this sense arbitrary, mode of access to the world. And yet something like an objective and necessary grasp of weight is possible only within the space carved out by this confused concept. The contingent grasp of weight grounds the necessary grasp, and the necessary grasp is not therefore a mere fiction, for it is in fact more precise, more determinate, and more objective than its ground.

Case Study Two: Natural Number

My second example is taken from Susan Carey's research on the development of the concept of natural number in childhood.[42] Children do not initially possess any concept of natural number. They do, however, possess some perceptual capacities related to number. Children can distinguish between a larger and a smaller set if the difference between the two is sufficiently large. This analog representation of number obeys Weber's law, that is, that the ratio at which we can distinguish magnitudes is constant (I can distinguish 6 and 9 items, but not 18 and 19). Further, young children are able to distinguish between and remember up to three objects. For example, if an infant sees two crackers being hidden in one jar and three in another, they will preferentially move toward the jar with three crackers and will remove three crackers from it (whereas, since they are unable to store four distinct items

in memory, they show little preference for a jar with four crackers). Neither of these capacities amounts to a concept of natural number. For example, neither of the infant's numerical capacities can distinguish between 19 and 20, while natural number can. Further, neither has the resources to represent numbers like 7 or 1,152. Natural number possesses the crucial characteristic of relating numbers in a sequence defined by the successor function (i.e., that each number in the sequence is reached by adding 1 to the previous number). The child's perception of number involves no such capacity. Thus, natural number is not definable in terms of initial perceptual numerical capacities.

On the other hand, natural number has its meaning only in virtue of these perceptual capacities. First, children learning natural number are taught a count list: "1, 2, 3 . . ." This count list is composed of explicit symbols that are intrinsically meaningless and initially have meaning only in virtue of their relation to each other. Once children learn the count list, they are in a position to perform the crucial induction: mapping their understanding of number (the ability to distinguish between one, two, and three) onto the count list. Thus, while natural number transcends perceptual numerical capacities, it acquires meaning only on the basis of those capacities: the count list acquires its meaning when the child learns to map their already available representations of 1, 2, and 3 onto this list—there is no inductive step without this recognition. Only because the child can leverage the numerical structures implicit in perception, can they develop sophisticated cognitive numerical structures.

One might object: I may have no innate capacity to *represent* 1,152, but I still understand this number, so why not think of this as an innate intellectual capacity? But consider the meaning this number has for me. I cannot recognize a mass of toothpicks scattered on the floor as 1,152 toothpicks or a 1,152-sided figure as having that many sides. Instead, it has its meaning in terms of the position it occupies in the count sequence, in terms of its relations to other numbers: it is one more than 1,151 and one less than 1,153, and I could, through such addition or subtraction of units, eventually arrive from 1,152 to any natural number. This meaning derives from the function of succession. But the successor function itself has a meaning for us (is not *just* the manipulation of symbols) only as a reconfiguration of our initial stock of perceptual meanings (1, 2, and 3). Moreover, it never entirely loses the meaning it has for me in terms of elementary perceptual structures. The analog representation of number persists even in the adult's grasp of the verbal integer list, which is why adults are much faster to decide that 9 is more

than 5 than they are to decide that 6 is more than 5.[43] There is nothing about natural number that is more conducive to the former than the latter decision (indeed, in learning natural number we become so familiar with the count sequence ". . . 4, 5, 6 . . ." that one might expect the opposite result), but the analog representation of number does explain this adherence to Weber's law.

Case Study Three: Galileo's Discovery of Kinematic Laws

My third example, taken from Wertheimer and Merleau-Ponty, belongs to the history of science: Galileo's discovery of the kinematic laws that underlie classical physics.[44] Galileo's laws significantly restructure the laws of motion that perception suggests. For example, Galileo's laws unite under one law cases of motion that seem to be described by different laws. It is easy to determine perceptually that heavy objects fall downward, and pre-Galilean physics viewed this as evidence that the natural home of heavy bodies is the earth. Uniform rectilinear motion (i.e., horizontal motion in a line), on the other hand, was described by a different set of laws: the body will move until its *vis impressa* no longer acts on it. The distinction between these two kinds of motion seems perfectly obvious. Yet Galileo unites both cases under a single law.

In brief, in *Productive Thinking* Wertheimer describes the process of structural reorganization that Galileo's thinking undergoes as follows:[45] It is perceptually available that heavy bodies fall, and that the longer they fall the faster they fall. Galileo sets out to determine how bodies fall more precisely. Since the speed of falling objects is great, exact measurements of time are difficult for Galileo to make. Instead, Galileo experiments with rolling objects down inclined surfaces: he conceives free fall as merely a special case of fall, fall at an angle of 90°. Experimenting with different angles of decline, Galileo finds that the lesser the angle, the lesser the object's acceleration; the closer to 90°, the greater the acceleration. It then occurs to Galileo that the converse is true of an object thrown upward: it undergoes the greatest negative acceleration if thrown vertically upward, and lesser negative acceleration the smaller the angle of incline. What about when the object is neither thrown upward nor dropped, but simply rolled forward? Since the angle is zero here, the object will undergo no acceleration or deceleration. In other words, its motion is constant. This leads Galileo to the conclusion that a body in rectilinear motion moving at constant velocity will never come to rest, except under the influence of friction. Inertia replaces the view that the body will move until its *vis impressa* no longer acts on it: it is not that the body runs out of *vis impressa*, but that an external force—friction—acts on

it. Galileo unites rectilinear motion and the acceleration of falling bodies under a single law, thereby transforming both.

In this way, Galileo's laws *generalize*—they move from particular cases of motion to a more universal definition of motion. Merleau-Ponty writes, "When Galileo succeeded in bringing under one signification the factors of uniform acceleration and deceleration—for example, the stone thrown in the air and the uniform rectilinear movement of a body on which there is no impinging force—these phenomena became variants of a single dynamic" (*PrW*, 105). These phenomena, which for perception seem to operate according to distinct structures, are revealed to be coordinated by a common law. The law generalizes, because it makes these distinct structures into "variants of a single dynamic." The law provided by the intellect is not false of the perceived particulars. Instead, it clarifies them in a way perception could not. Thus, the intellect draws out truths about the perceptual world that perception itself does not contain; it determines and explicates perception through generalizing and formalizing (see also *PrP*, 69).

At the same time, the general law draws its meaning from the experiences it explicates. Merleau-Ponty writes of the signification developed by Galileo:

> [It] can in principle appear only through the concrete shapes which it unifies. That it appears to us on the basis of "particular cases" is not an accident of its genesis with no essential effect. The signification is inscribed in its content, and if we tried to abstract the signification from the circumstances in which it appears, the signification would vanish before our eyes. The latter is not so much a signification over and above the facts which signify it as our means of passing from one fact to another or the trace of their intellectual generation. (*PrW*, 105)

In other words, it is only by gradual rearrangement of the perceptually available structures that Galileo's conclusions have meaning or evidence for us. We do not experience a kind of motion undivided between the two cases: we experience either the heavy body falling or the rectilinear motion. A motion that would be neither of these has no meaning for us. More, we do not experience the inertia of moving objects: all bodies perceptually available come to rest under the influence of friction, and consequently perception does not decide between an interpretation of an object expending its *vis impressa* or an object limited by friction that would ideally undergo constant motion.

How do we make sense of Galileo's conclusion, then? Only in virtue of a structural reconfiguration demanded by Galileo's realization that deceleration decreases with the angle of incline and acceleration increases with the angle of decline. If we do not intuit this demand for ourselves, then the idea of inertia is a mere placeholder for a meaning that belongs within a structure of other terms (motion, rest, acceleration, distance, space, etc.), and that I can perfectly well use to perform calculations, but has no meaning for me. I only have reason to see the truth of Galileo's laws when I see how they provide a more determinate and stable description of the perceptually available phenomena. Thus, it is only within and on the basis of the contingent that the more universal and necessary is evidenced; the former is not the mere occasion for the latter—it is its foundation.

Case Study Four: Space

The same model applies to cases of nonscientific necessary knowledge. Take Merleau-Ponty's analysis of space. Merleau-Ponty argues that the contingent modes of access to space provided by the senses are inseparable from the meaning space has for us. This might seem unlikely, given that the intuition of space, being unique and common to each of the senses, is presumably a priori. One might think that since vision, touch, and hearing all disclose the same space—which is why the tactile experience of space can be coordinated with the visual experience of space—each provides a merely contingent means of access to space. If both vision and touch disclose the same space, neither of them are inseparable parts of the intuition of space; neither the blind person nor the hypoesthesiac lacks an experience of space, and thus each sense is an accidental and subjective mode of access to the sense of space.[46]

But, on the other hand, space has the meaning it does for us only in virtue of the senses that disclose it. And Merleau-Ponty argues that the senses do not disclose space in a univocal manner. Vision and touch, despite revealing the same world, each give the world with a structure that is not transposable into the other. There is no way, in other words, to define the visual sense of space in terms of the tactile sense of space. Take, for example, Jonathan Franzen's description of a child forced to remain at the table until finished with dinner:

> Even the most extreme boredom had merciful limits. The dinner table, for example, possessed an underside that Chipper explored by resting his chin on the surface and stretching his arms out below.

> At his farthest reach were baffles pierced by taut wire leading to pullable rings. Complicated intersections of roughly finished blocks and angles were punctuated, here and there, by deeply countersunk screws, little cylindrical wells with scratchy turnings of wood fiber around their mouths, irresistible to the probing finger. Even more rewarding were the patches of booger he'd left behind during previous vigils. The dried patches had the texture of rice paper or fly wings. They were agreeably dislodgable and pulverizable.
>
> The longer Chipper felt his little kingdom of the underside, the more reluctant he became to lay eyes on it. Instinctively he knew that the visible reality would be puny. He'd see crannies he hadn't yet discovered with his fingers, and the mystery of the realms beyond his reach would be dispelled, the screw holes would lose their abstract sensuality and the boogers would shame him, and one evening, then, with nothing to relish or discover, he might just die of boredom.[47]

As Franzen illustrates, vision has a power of distance that collapses space, whereas the proximity of touch expands it; vision surveys a realm in one glance, and having captured it, removes the mysterious quality of tactile space (the solicitation of which was irresistible to the probing finger), and so gives way to boredom; the materiality of the screw holes coalesces into a concrete meaning; what was so agreeable in the sensuality of the texture of dried boogers, in the light of the eye (as if in seeing, one were being seen), turns to shame. Merleau-Ponty makes a similar point in claiming that, whereas touch can only give us simultaneity with a small extension (that of the body), vision can coordinate two distant events that touch can traverse only with time (*PhP*, 232). Thus, vision makes possible a distant simultaneity that touch could not; the set of structures through which it reveals space differ from those of touch.

One way we can make this point is by noting that if one only had the visual experience of space, one would not thereby be able successfully to imagine the tactile experience of space, or vice versa. According to Merleau-Ponty, this nontransposability of the tactile and visual experiences of space explains why a patient blind from birth, once their cataracts have been removed, can claim never to have had the experience of space prior to the operation (*PhP*, 231, 536). Merleau-Ponty argues that the patient is not rigorously correct in this claim, since the latter reaches to touch what he sees, attempting to palpate sunlight, for example, which is possible only if he locates vision and touch within a common spatial universe. And yet the patient could experience the

arrival of vision as an event—as a revelation of space—only if vision gives space in a way that touch does not. The patient does not readily know how to coordinate vision and touch, and this is possible only if vision and touch reveal space through distinct structures and with a distinct sense. Space is not the same after the arrival of vision, and this means that space is not something "above" the senses, but rather a meaning produced by the synergy of the senses involved in normal perception of spatial objects, much as binocular vision is produced by the synergy between two eyes. Indeed, only through this synergy between the senses does each particular sense become a contingent mode of access to space, and thus space is not something separable from the senses, but separable only from each particular sense, just as binocular vision is separable from each individual eye while being the power only of their synthesis.

The contingent senses are essential—and not accidental—not only to the a priori intuition of space, but also to our intellectual grasp of this space in geometry. This position is counterintuitive for similar reasons: each sense is contingent to our grasp of geometry. For example, blind people are able to learn geometry, and so the visual structure of space cannot be necessary to geometrical knowledge. But this fact does not hinder the sense of geometry from being transformed by the arrival of vision. The patient whose cataracts have been removed claims that the circle and the square are not genuinely perceived by touch, but recognized only according to signs (the presence and absence of edges) (*PhP*, 233). Again, the patient may well overstate the case. Yet the fact that he can be surprised by how a circle or a square looks—that they are not what he had anticipated—shows that vision discloses geometry in a way different from touch. Both vision and touch disclose geometrical truths, and thus each is contingent with respect to these truths. But each gives these truths a unique sense, which the geometrical definitions alone (e.g., a figure the radii of which all are equal) do not capture. The definition is perfectly transposable between the blind and the sighted geometer. And yet the sense it captures is different for each. Perhaps some other sense not yet imagined could give a new meaning to this definition. And perhaps one could perform many geometrical operations correctly without possessing either touch or vision. And yet none of this entails that there is a sense of space independent of sensory modalities. The sense of space given by our sensory modalities is no mere occasion for us to attain a unique idea of space that escapes them, for if it were, then the advent of vision would not be a genuine event: we could not learn from it, nor could it come as a genuine surprise. Not that I couldn't operate perfectly well on definitions such as "A circle is a figure the radii of

which are equal" independently of any sensory experience of space—again, the claim is just that in this case such definitions would simply have no meaning or truth for me. Consequently, there is no valid inference from the contingency of our sensory modalities with respect to space to the independence of space from our sensory modalities. Space, a priori though it is (i.e., universal and necessary), has its meaning through our varied and contingent modes of access to it.

In each of these cases, we observe the same structure: a set of perceptual meanings or evidences motivate a set of intellectual meanings or evidences that transcend their motives. Here, then, we have concrete examples of how an account of knowledge in terms of motivation can avoid the shortcomings of both rationalism and empiricism, as traditionally understood: motivation allows us to see how knowledge can be founded on perception, even while the two are incommensurable. There is no opposition between the "antinomical" insights of rationalism and empiricism; in each of the above cases, the two work together as aspects of a single structure—the structure of the genesis of knowledge.

CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTUAL FAITH

In an address given shortly after the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes that "the primacy of perception . . . is the remedy to skepticism and pessimism" (*PrP*, 26). In the previous chapters, I argued that all our knowledge depends on perception. But it is, of course, possible to be a skeptic about perception. Perception may have a certain primacy, but why think that perception is a reliable ground for knowledge? Far from remedying skepticism, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, the primacy of perception may simply compound it.

To address this problem, we must turn to Merleau-Ponty's notion of perceptual faith: our belief in what we perceive prior to all verification or proof.[1] Such faith is not some sort of active decision, in the face of our ignorance, to believe. Rather, it names a spontaneous feature of our perception, namely, that when I see, I believe. For Merleau-Ponty, this faith is the ultimate foundation of all our knowledge (see, e.g., *PhP*, 360), for, as I have argued, all knowledge is founded on perception, and perception has weight for us only in virtue of perceptual faith.

The central issue I will have to address is that here, too, perceptual faith hardly seems immune to skepticism. It would, I think, be natural—given prevailing epistemological assumptions—to approach Merleau-Ponty's idea of perceptual faith as follows: Merleau-Ponty claims that perceptual faith grounds knowledge, but the only kind of ground that knowledge can have, if it is indeed to be knowledge, is justification; an item of knowledge is grounded, insofar as it is knowledge, in a reason that justifies it. But surely perceptual faith cannot justify our knowledge. If we approach perceptual faith with the exacting standards of justification, it falls short: our perception is not always so trustworthy as it appears. And itself being unjustified, perceptual faith comes to look not like a justification of belief, but like a psychological fact about our beliefs; it explains, but does not justify, our beliefs.

But any belief that is merely explainable, and not justifiable, does not deserve to be called knowledge at all. It is just opinion. By grounding our knowledge in perceptual faith, Merleau-Ponty might seem to have made any knowledge, rightfully so called, unavailable. Doesn't perceptual faith lead us directly to skepticism, then?

Merleau-Ponty's whole epistemological project is threatened by this problem, and so I need now to offer an exposition of perceptual faith and to defend it from this skeptical challenge. I will argue that perceptual faith is not really in such danger, since the skeptical challenge presupposes the dichotomy of reason and causality that I have been calling into question throughout this book. Once again, to understand Merleau-Ponty's position, we will need instead to approach perceptual faith through the lens of motivation. Further, doing so will supply us with the purported remedy to skepticism.

WHAT IS PERCEPTUAL FAITH?

When I round a corner and see a tree just down the lane, I do not just have an appearance of a tree: I trust in my appearance; I believe there is a tree. I do not experience this belief as optional, as if the matter were in question and I might decide for or against the appearance—I simply believe the appearance. In other words, I spontaneously take the appearance to be genuine, and not *mere*, appearance.[2] Perceptual faith—also described as a "primordial opinion" or an "originary opinion" (*PhP*, 359)—is, according to Merleau-Ponty, the function that makes this so: it invests our appearances with "the value of reality" (*PhP*, 358), and thereby "carries us beyond subjectivity" and "places us in the world" (*PhP*, 360). Perceptual faith is, in other words, that which binds for us appearance to being.

But while perceptual faith is that in virtue of which we invest credence in what appears to us—it confers the "mark of reality" (*PhP*, 359) on appearance—it does not do so in the manner of a judgment: perceptual faith is not a judgment of the form "*X* exists" or "There is *X*." In other words, perceptual faith is not an active position-taking, not an affirmation or denial of being.[3] As Merleau-Ponty writes, "Beneath affirmation and negation, beneath judgment (those critical opinions, ulterior operations), [perceptual faith] is our experience . . . of inhabiting the world by our body" (*VI*, 28). We can recall the quote here, considered in chapter 2, in which Merleau-Ponty distinguishes perception and judgment: "Between sensing and judging,

ordinary experience draws a very clear distinction. It understands judgment to be a position-taking. . . . It takes sensing, on the contrary, to be the giving of oneself over to the appearance without seeking to possess it or know its truth" (*PhP*, 36). Perceptual faith is not a position-taking, but just such a "giving of oneself over" to the perceived.

Now, since knowledge is composed of judgments, and perceptual faith is not a judgment, perceptual faith clearly does not take place on the order of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty expressly claims as much, arguing that this credence is "faith, therefore, and not knowledge, . . . since, rather than affirmed, [in perceptual faith the world] is taken for granted" (*VI*, 28). Further, Merleau-Ponty claims that this faith is "beyond proofs" (*VI*, 28) and is perceived "prior to all verification" (*PhP*, 358). As I understand it, this means that perceptual faith is not justified, is not grounded in the giving and taking of reasons: perceptual faith does not stand within the logical space of reasons.

But if perceptual faith is not a judgment we make about perception, then what is it? It is, I suggest, part of the "spontaneous sense" characteristic of perception. Just as I do not need to judge "That is a tree" in order to perceive the tree, so I do not need to judge "There is a tree" in order to trust my perception. When I turn the corner and stand in its presence, I do not affirm existence of the tree, and yet it would be false to think that my perception is undecided between, indifferent to, its existence or nonexistence. Instead, we will have to say something like "I perceive the tree *as* real or *as* existing."[4]

Further, though not a judgment of existence, perceptual faith does ground such judgments. Husserl, who refers to what Merleau-Ponty calls "perceptual faith" as "passive doxa," argues as much in writing that judicative position-takings are "completely non-independent from the standpoint of intentionality, namely, insofar as they presuppose the occurrences of passive *doxa*."[5] This is because such judgments are just affirmations or denials of passive *doxai*: in judgments about modality (existence, nonexistence, possibility, etc.), I actively take up a passive belief about modality and affirm or deny it. I do so, at least in large part, in accordance with how I am motivated by that belief. If I perceive the tree and have a passive *doxa* in the tree's existence, I will be motivated to affirm existence of the tree, in the manner described in chapter 3. Thus, while perceptual faith does not have a standing within the logical space of reasons, it does motivate judgments, which, qua judgments, do have this standing.

I have provisionally said that perceptual faith names something like the fact that when one perceives, one perceives the perceived *as* existing or real.

But let me try to be more precise about the relation between perception and perceptual faith. In particular, we should ask whether perceptual faith is a separate capacity that simply confers "the mark of reality," the sense of existence, on our perceptions.

On the contrary, I would argue that perceptual faith is part of the normal operation of our perceptual capacities.[6] This might seem a surprising claim, since it is not strictly impossible to perceive without trusting one's perception. But such cases are non-normal. In the normal case, as, for example, when we round the corner and see the tree, to see and to believe are inseparable. In such cases, belief is not optional: to see the tree is to believe in the tree's existence. Indeed, generally speaking, we disbelieve our perception only when we don't fully perceive. Take again the case in which what I initially take to be a person is revealed as a mannequin, except let us say that this time we are poised between the two perceptions—the perceptual givens do not resolve themselves in favor of one interpretation or the other. In this case, I will not believe either in the mannequin's existence or in the person's. But this is only because I do not actually perceive the mannequin or the person; if, as I walk closer, the perceptual givens do resolve themselves, say, in favor of the mannequin interpretation, such that I see a mannequin, then I will believe in the mannequin's existence. And if they don't resolve themselves, the more they tend toward the one perception, the more I will believe the world is as that perception gives it.

One might object that optical illusions give us straightforward cases in which one sees one way but believes another. But this objection confuses perceptual faith with judgment. Certainly, one can see the Müller-Lyer lines as unequal without *judging* that they are unequal. But, even in such cases, there is a spontaneous belief in one's perception, which is why these cases are unsettling, and why it makes sense to describe one's reaction to the judgment that the lines are equal as "disbelief."

Now, this is not to say that there are *no* cases in which appearance and belief really do disengage. For example, Merleau-Ponty claims that hallucinations do not really solicit belief in the way perceptions do. We have seen him claim, "There is a difference between the motivated judgement of a true perception and the empty judgment of a false perception" (*PhP*, 36). And he writes elsewhere, "Confronted by the real thing, our behavior feels motivated by the 'stimuli' that fill it out and that justify its intention. When it comes to fantasy, the initiative comes from us and nothing responds to it on the outside" (*PhP*, 355). So, in hallucination we have a case of appearance that can be disengaged from spontaneous belief. But there are even cases where belief

and perception disengage. A patient suffering hallucinations may experience a kind of belief in those hallucinations (i.e., it is possible to have spontaneous belief without genuine perception). Conversely, it may be possible not to spontaneously believe in genuine perceptions. But the important point for us is that such cases are *disorientations* of perceptual faith. In hallucination the whole motivational apparatus (e.g., the body schema; see *PhP*, 355) for perceiving a world has become disoriented. In this sense, hallucination is primarily a disruption in the capacity to respond to motivational forces: the patient ceases to respond to the difference between "motivated" and "empty" experiences. In claiming that perceptual faith is intrinsic to perception, then, I don't mean that the two can never be separated, only that perceptual faith is part of the "normal" functioning of our perceptual capacities, in the sense that perceptual faith is a *normative* part of our perceptual capacities. As I conceive it, perceptual faith names a spontaneous alertness to normative forces exerted by the phenomena, specifically, to normative forces that support one in perceiving *as* real (i.e., those features of the perceptual stimuli that "fill out" our perceptual experience). Features such as coherence, determinacy, and plenitude (openness for further exploration), which I will discuss more in the following section, normatively motivate one in perceptually experiencing something as real.[7] Perceptual faith is just a spontaneous sensitivity to such normative forces.

The view I am attributing to Merleau-Ponty is, I believe, analogous to Aristotle's claim about opinion (*doxa*), that it is followed by belief (*pistis*), since we would not have opinion without belief in what we opine.[8] As I understand it, this does not suggest anything as implausible as that we cannot even entertain a judgment without believing it. Rather, Aristotle means that opinion is, so to speak, *normatively oriented* toward the true—unlike imagination, opinion, Aristotle claims, is not voluntary, since it is bound by truth and falsity[9]—and so we cannot even make sense of the idea of forming an opinion without believing in what one opines. Similarly, we might say of perception that it is normatively oriented toward the true, and so we cannot even make sense of the idea of perception without the idea of faith in what we perceive. This will be so even if in non-normal cases, perception can be disengaged from such faith.

It must be admitted that Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly identify perceptual faith as motivated. Nevertheless, such an account is faithful to his work. Since I have understood motivation as such a spontaneous sensitivity to norms, and I have tried to describe perceptual faith in just these terms,

we should understand perceptual faith as motivated. As we have just seen, Merleau-Ponty claims that our behavior is "motivated" by the stimuli that fill it out (*PhP*, 355), such that the real solicits our faith in a manner imagination does not. Prior to my faith in the real, then, there is a "vague solicitation" from the real that norms this faith. Indeed, this solicitation is what the real or the sensible, considered in abstraction from the bodily contribution to perception, most of all is. Merleau-Ponty writes, "Without the exploration of my gaze or my hand, and prior to my body synchronizing with it, the sensible is nothing but a vague solicitation" (*PhP*, 222). As our bodily attunement to such solicitations, perceptual faith is normatively motivated by the perceptual field, such that the former is part of the normal functioning of our perceptual capacities.

With a basic appreciation for what perceptual faith is, let us now begin to confront the problem posed above. For Merleau-Ponty, what the idea of perceptual faith fundamentally accomplishes is to resist both a rationalism, which would show that our knowledge is justified by perception, and a skepticism, which would, by noting the inadequacy of perception for justifying knowledge, point out that we in fact have no knowledge.[10] Let us see how this is so.

RATIONALISM AND PERCEPTUAL FAITH

As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty argues that perceptual faith occurs beneath the level of explicit judgment; it is the result neither of proof nor of a process of verification. It seems to me that this claim should already be sufficiently clear from the fact that perceptual faith is spontaneous, whereas a crucial feature of the logical space of reasons is activity. As I argued in chapter 3, such spontaneity cannot plausibly be described in terms of the giving and taking of reasons, because it lacks the revisability characteristic of the logical space of reasons. If I have good reason to judge that my perception does not match reality, I will not necessarily be able to suspend my faith in the perceived. I do not quite stop believing that the Müller-Lyer lines are as I perceive them, for example, which is why I find the judgment of equality so unsettling. I can certainly suspend the motivational bond between perceptual faith and judgment, but that is not to revise perceptual faith.

Merleau-Ponty's own argument for this principle, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, is related to this point, but approaches it through an analysis of

hallucination. I've explained my interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of hallucination elsewhere, but I will briefly recap the main points here.[11] For my purposes, there are two key points Merleau-Ponty makes about hallucination: first, that hallucinations differ structurally from perceptions; and second, that hallucinations can nevertheless deceive us.

Start with the first of these. Merleau-Ponty's prima facie reason for thinking perceptions differ structurally from hallucinations is that patients suffering from hallucinations are able to distinguish their hallucinations from perceptions. For example, a patient who sees his doctor's hand as a guinea pig immediately recognizes the difference between the hallucination and a perception when a genuine guinea pig is placed in the doctor's other hand (*PhP*, 350). If patients *can* distinguish hallucinations from perceptions in this manner, there must be some difference between the two, and, specifically, there must be some structural difference in the *experience* of perceptions and hallucinations that is available to those patients.

The main such structural difference between perception and hallucination is that the former is characterized by a horizon structure that the latter lacks. In other words, every perceptual experience includes as part of its content a horizon of possible experiences that confirm or correct the present experience. The perceived object has an "internal horizon," in virtue of which it can be experienced in ever greater detail as I examine it more closely; and an "external horizon," in virtue of which it unfolds harmoniously with a system of other objects. Hallucinations lack these horizons. Merleau-Ponty writes, "The hallucinatory thing is not like the real thing, packed with little perceptions that sustain it in existence. Rather, it is an implicit and inarticulate signification" (*PhP*, 355); or, as he also writes, "Imagination is without depth" (*PhP*, 338). Consider the temporality of a dream as opposed to a perception. Perception *discerns* its world, and for this reason often has to wait for the world to come into view. If I see someone emerging from a building into a poorly lit street, there will be a moment in which I do not know who is emerging, only that someone is emerging. Then, as I gradually get a better look, I may succeed in recognizing who, exactly, I am perceiving. In contrast, the dreamed object merges with its significance, such that the mere intention of an event can suffice for its occurrence. As Sartre puts it, "The dreamer does not say 'I could have had a revolver,' but all at once has a revolver in hand."[12] In the dream, I can have a premonition of who is leaving the building even before the door opens. There is no question here of gradually discerning a figure out of perceptual givens, since the object has no horizon—it is

simultaneous with my intention. In other words, the dream object lacks the "plenitude" of the real thing, and even when we learn more about the dream object over the course of time, this is not a matter of discovery (of unfolding the horizons of the dream), but of creation.[13]

Hallucination lacks external horizons, insofar as hallucinations often contradict both each other and genuine perceptions, and because they cannot be confirmed by the testimony of others. And whereas the perceived world admits of analysis in terms of precise causal connections (*PhP*, 357), the hallucinatory world does not—one phenomenon gives rise to another in a manner that leaves both at most compossible with each other, but not yet connected. This is why, as Sartre says of the dream, hallucinations have at most the "atmosphere of a world" but no world.[14]

So, there are structural differences between the experiences of perception and hallucination. Even so, hallucination can deceive us. Though, when pressed, patients can at times distinguish perceptions from hallucinations, there is no guarantee of being able to do so. And this presents a problem: If the experience of hallucination differs in structure from that of perception, how can it pass itself off as perception?

According to Merleau-Ponty, this fact about hallucination tells us something important about perceptual faith. If in order to experience an appearance as real, I had to explicitly run through the internal and external horizons of that appearance, then I would note the inconsistencies of the hallucination and reject it. So perceptual faith cannot work in this manner. Instead, the operation by which I have faith in appearances must be implicit and must not require determination of the horizons of each appearance. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "Hallucinatory illusion is possible even though hallucination is never perception, . . . because here we are still within pre-predicative being, and because the connection between appearances and total experiences is merely implicit and presumptive, even in the case of true perception" (*PhP*, 359).[15] It is this belief in appearances prior to explicit verification, judgments of consistency and inconsistency, that Merleau-Ponty calls perceptual faith.

Merleau-Ponty concludes that perceptual faith is not on the order of explicit judgment. It is a spontaneous credence, not built on a bedrock of reasons or justifications. Perceptual faith, Merleau-Ponty says, is "beyond proofs" (*VI*, 28); "beneath affirmation and negation, beneath judgment" (*VI*, 28); and "prior to all verification" (*PhP*, 358). More to the point, Merleau-Ponty writes that perceptual faith cannot be understood as "a belief among others, founded like any other on reasons—the reasons we have to *think that*

there is a world. . . . It is clear that in the case of perception the conclusion comes before the reasons, which are there only to take its place or to back it up when it is shaken" (*VI*, 50). Here, Merleau-Ponty denies that perceptual faith stands within the logical space of reasons; the former is not justified, because it precedes the latter.

SKEPTICISM

It is tempting to think that if perceptual faith is unjustified, then it must be a merely arbitrary and subjective emotion attaching to our perceptions. Admittedly, one might reason, our belief in appearances is a fact about our interactions with the world. But this fact about how we do actually think tells us nothing about how we *should* think. In short, it seems that if perceptual faith is not justified, then it tells us only about our own psychology, and nothing about epistemology.

This is a version of skepticism about perception. Since our trust in perception does not guarantee our knowledge, it is inadmissible as a ground for knowledge; given the fact that perception frequently misleads us, it seems that our belief in perception can be no more than a psychological fact, a fact insufficient to establish a warrant for knowledge. In other words, our belief in the perceptual world, because it is not justified, must be understood as a natural fact about us, *caused* in us, but lacking normative import. However, just as Merleau-Ponty resists thinking of perceptual faith as justifying our belief in perception, so he resists thinking of the former as merely causing the latter. That perceptual faith does not merely explain our belief, in a manner that leaves the latter open to skepticism, seems to me evident already from the claim made above that perceptual faith is normed. Perceptual faith *does* have normative import, because it names a spontaneous responsiveness to normative forces. If I am right, then this base-level skepticism would be unwarranted. Certainly, perceptual faith is fallible, but it is not a merely contingent fact about ourselves, and so there is no motive to reject it *tout court*.

Merleau-Ponty's own arguments against skepticism, though again related, are more complex, and require some exposition here.[16] The core idea, I suggest, in Merleau-Ponty's response to skepticism is that illusion cannot disqualify perception as a normative force in our epistemology, because illusion essentially depends on perception. There are, I think, at least two lines of this argument.

First—in an argument largely shared with the Sellarsian/McDowellian thought that the statement "it appears to me that X" is essentially dependent on the statement "X"[17]—Merleau-Ponty writes of illusion, "*This fiction can only count as a reality because reality itself is reached for the normal subject in an analogous operation*" (*PhP*, 358). The idea, in brief, is that the very notion of illusion, of something merely appearing to be the case, requires the notion of genuine perception, of something's genuinely appearing as it is.

Merleau-Ponty's intent here is evidently not to argue that for us to be able to attribute reality to our hallucinations, at least one of our perceptions must have in fact attained to reality. He denies that any particular perception can possess such certainty: "The existence of the perceived is never necessary" (*PhP*, 359). Instead, his view is that the very *possibility* of a false experience presupposes the *possibility* of a true one: our conception of a false experience is just an experience that presents itself merely *as if* it reached reality, and so requires a conception of an experience that does in fact reach reality. This is, more or less, what Merleau-Ponty means when he writes that "there could be no error where there is still no truth" (*PhP*, 360).

This means that, rather than providing a response to skepticism that concerns our capacity for ontic knowledge—our capacity for knowledge about particular truths, for example, "That is a tree"—Merleau-Ponty's response is ontological (i.e., it concerns the very relation between perception and the world). His claim is that only because experience is intrinsically oriented toward the true can it at times suffer the false. In this vein, he writes that "to wonder if the world is real is to fail to understand what one is saying, since the world is not a sum of things that one could always cast into doubt" (*PhP*, 360). The world, in this sense, is not itself some particular being, nor a collection of particular beings, but an ontological structure—it is that *within which* any particular being is experienced. The important point, then, is that we can be mistaken only on the ontic level if, ontologically, perception reveals the true; only if we experience a world can we at times fail to perceive particular inner-worldly beings correctly.

Second, Merleau-Ponty argues that skepticism is motivated by an inadequate phenomenology of disillusion (see *PhP*, 311, 359–60; and *VI*, 40–41). What motivates skepticism is the experience of disillusion, of discovering that what I took to be a perception was in fact an illusion all along. If I could be deceived previously, nothing guarantees that I am not now deceived, and so perception loses all security—at best, it reveals the world to a degree of probability. To use Merleau-Ponty's example, I may discover that what I took

to be driftwood is in fact a rock. In this case, one perception has been shown false, and if this was possible with the driftwood perception, then surely it is also possible with the rock perception, and so on (*VI*, 40).

But Merleau-Ponty notes that disillusion in fact confirms the very bond it is supposed to sever. One perception is only ever displaced by another perception. It is only because I *perceive* the boulder, for example, that the perception of the driftwood is displaced.[18] If this is true, then disillusion is itself possible only in virtue of perception. Far from drawing our perceptual bond with the world into question, every disillusion confirms it beyond the particular perception it cancels. Again, this conclusion is ontological and not ontic. It is true, of course, that each particular perception may eventually be shown false, but it can be *evidenced* as false only in virtue of some new perception. So, what is secured from skepticism here is not the particular perception, but perception's very bond with the world.

> Each perception, although always potentially "crossed out" and pushed over to the realm of illusions, only disappears in order to leave a place for another perception that corrects it. Of course, each thing can, *après coup*, appear uncertain, but at least it is certain for us that there are things, that is, that there is a world. To wonder if the world is real is to fail to understand what one is saying, since the world is not a sum of things that one could always cast into doubt, but precisely the inexhaustible reservoir from which things are drawn. The perceived, taken in its entirety, along with the worldly horizon *that simultaneously announces its possible disjunction and its eventual replacement by another perception*, does not fully trick us. There could be no error where there is still no truth. (*PhP*, 359–60)

No perception is certain, then. However, what *is* certain is our belonging to the world, which every disillusion only confirms.

For these reasons, Merleau-Ponty rejects a skeptical response to perceptual faith: perceptual faith is not merely something to explain, but a nonarbitrary feature of our perceptual capacities.[19]

It might be tempting to double back and take this argument as an attempt to justify perceptual faith. On this interpretation, Merleau-Ponty has purportedly shown that our faith in the perceived world is based on a solid ground of reason and therefore beyond doubt. The problem with this interpretation is

that it would contravene Merleau-Ponty's assertions that his aim is, in a sense, to return to the perceptual faith (*VI*, 158).[20] If we can justify perceptual faith, then we are obviously no longer dealing with faith at all, but with knowledge. By justifying the perceptual faith, we would not have returned to it, nor shown how knowledge can be grounded in it, but rather obviated it altogether. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's response to skepticism in *The Visible and the Invisible* arises precisely in the context of criticizing the efforts of reflective philosophy to reconstruct perception in terms of justification: Merleau-Ponty objects that such an effort defines perception "not by what it gives us, but by what in it *withstands* the hypothesis of *non-existence*; it is to identify from the first the positive with a negation of negation; it is to require of the innocent the proof of his non-culpability" (*VI*, 39).

In my view, it would be better to interpret Merleau-Ponty as making space for perceptual faith by showing how a certain type of skepticism is unintelligible. On this interpretation, Merleau-Ponty does not show that perceptual faith is justified, only that the skeptical argument presupposes the very faith it is supposed to call into question. What Merleau-Ponty does is not to furnish the innocent with a "proof of its non-culpability," but to remove the warrant for such a proof. Perception, he points out, already distinguishes itself from imagination, and that perception is fallible does not mean that it cannot itself provide for this distinction in general.

In sum, the skeptic's deep argument is that because perception at times fails to distinguish itself from illusion, it therefore does not suffice to distinguish between perception and illusion or, in other words, does not suffice to establish our bond with the world. Responding to this concern, philosophies like Descartes' or Kant's justify our bond to the world through a nonperceptual capacity: reason. But there is no need for such justification, because this skeptical concern presupposes the sort of contact with the world it supposedly upsets. Perception has within itself the resources to bind us to the world, and this primary bond with the world is not severed by its fallibility. All Merleau-Ponty does is to show the skeptical concern unfounded, in order to make space for this primary bond. The whole challenge with respect to perceptual faith is not to distort its motivational force by either interpreting it as a justification for judgment or else abandoning it, out of a skeptical concern, as a mere explanation for our belief. Merleau-Ponty's arguments against skepticism do not push us into the former mistake, they just push us out of the latter.

THE DISJUNCTIVIST OPTION

It might seem that at this point I have secured a space for perceptual faith, understood as part of the motivating force of perception. But there is a particular kind of rationalism about our belief in the world that is not well accounted for in the preceding arguments. This kind of rationalism (by which, recall, in this context I mean a view on which perception justifies, or is a reason for, our belief in the world) is epistemological disjunctivism. This option requires treatment here, both because several recent interpretations have located a form of epistemological disjunctivism, akin to McDowell's or Pritchard's, in Merleau-Ponty, and because the relation between phenomenology and McDowell's disjunctivism has become a much-discussed subject in the past two decades. With regard to the first point, Berendzen has argued that one can actually find an epistemological disjunctivism in Merleau-Ponty.[21] Jensen has argued that Merleau-Ponty shares with the disjunctivist at least the view that there is an intrinsic difference between perception and illusion and a rejection of the Cartesian view of the mind as fully transparent to itself.[22] A similar question has surrounded Husserl's work.[23] With regard to the second point, others have argued that regardless of how we interpret historical phenomenologists, phenomenology *ought* to accept some form of disjunctivism. For example, Romano has argued that Merleau-Ponty came relatively close to a disjunctivist interpretation of appearances, without actually accepting one.[24] But, according to Romano, this is a fault of Merleau-Ponty's, since we can resolve the considerable tensions within phenomenology only by endorsing disjunctivism. Now, an epistemological disjunctivist interpretation of either Merleau-Ponty or the bond between perception and belief would contradict my own, given that the former holds that perceptions *justify* beliefs about the world. Therefore, I need to clarify why I think Merleau-Ponty is not an epistemological disjunctivist, as well as why I prefer Merleau-Ponty's view.

Let me begin by explaining how I understand epistemological disjunctivism. McDowell frames his version of disjunctivism in response to the same, characteristically modern, skeptical problem confronted by Merleau-Ponty. We can understand this familiar problem as arising from the following claims:

a. Perception entitles us to beliefs about the external world.
b. Illusion does not entitle us to beliefs about the external world.
c. Perceptions and illusions are often introspectively indistinguishable.

It seems to follow from these propositions that, given some appearance, we do not know whether we are entitled to the belief it purports to ground, since we do not know whether we are experiencing a perception or an illusion (or a hallucination—for simplicity, I will not distinguish between illusions and hallucinations in this section). So, the possibility of illusion spoils the direct access to the world that perception would otherwise appear to provide; when we entertain a given appearance, we are not really entitled to form beliefs about the external world—all we are entitled to is beliefs about the appearance we are currently having. It is just this line of thought that McDowell's disjunctivism is meant to block.

At its core, disjunctivism is an analysis of perceptual experience, according to which, when one has a perceptual experience, one is having either a perception or an illusion. As McDowell puts it, "Perceptual appearances are either objective states of affairs making themselves manifest to subjects, or situations in which it is as if an objective state of affairs is making itself manifest to a subject, although that is not how things are."[25] In this way, perception and illusion are different kinds of states, perceptions being veridical (if I perceive *p*, then *p* exists), and illusions are not.

This might seem an obvious claim, but its real content is that the difference between perception and illusion is intrinsic (i.e., is not dependent on features external to the perception itself). Contrast this with a conjunctive conception, on which the difference between perception and illusion is extrinsic: perceptions and illusions are intrinsically the same—both are appearances—and are distinguished only by a factor external to them, namely, the existence or nonexistence of their object. Of course, for McDowell, both perception and illusion *are* appearances,[26] but this is not *all* they are intrinsically: to know the whole truth about an appearance, we have to know whether it is a *genuine* or else a *mere* appearance.

The idea that there is an intrinsic difference between perception and illusion is perfectly compatible with our perceptual capacities' fallibility. As a matter of fact, claims the disjunctivist, we are often unable to distinguish whether an objective state of affairs is making itself manifest or it is merely *as if* an objective state of affairs were making itself manifest. But the disjunctivist's idea is that the fact that perceptions and illusions are often introspectively indistinguishable doesn't entail that objective states of affairs do not, when we do perceive, make themselves manifest to us. In other words, that I can mistake an illusion for a perception does not mean that when I *do* in fact perceive I am not better off, epistemically, than when I have an illusion. To

quote McDowell, using an example from Dretske, "If the animal in front of me is a zebra [and not a mule painted to look like a zebra], and conditions are suitable for exercising my ability to recognize zebras when I see them (for instance, the animal is in full view), then that ability, fallible though it is, enables me to see that it is a zebra, and to know that I do."[27] So, there is no valid inference from fallibility to the skeptic's conclusion. To make such an inference, McDowell claims, would be tantamount to arguing that because a skilled basketball player occasionally misses free throws, she therefore lacks the capacity to make free throws.[28]

Now, while epistemological disjunctivists sometimes write as if disjunctivism alone blocks the skeptical inference, I do not think this can actually be the case. It does *not* follow immediately from the intrinsic difference between perception and illusion that I can *know p* when I *perceive p*; it just follows that when I perceive *p*, I do not have a *mere* appearance of *p*. The skeptic's challenge is meant to drive just this wedge between perceiving and knowing: to know *p* requires something over and above the requirements for perception, namely, that I have a warrant for believing *p* and a warrant that I can know by reflection. The threat is that if I cannot distinguish between perception and illusion, then perhaps perception cannot really be said to provide such a warrant. The point that perceptions are intrinsically different from illusions does nothing to dispel this threat.

Obviously, this skeptical challenge relies on an internalist intuition, namely, that to know—rather than merely to opine—*p* requires that I have a reason for believing that *p*, and can reflectively access this reason. If, when pressed, I can't give a reason for my belief, then even if my belief is true, it will be no better than a lucky guess. According to the internalist, knowledge requires more than this. In the case of perceptual knowledge, my warrant for believing *p* is supposed to be my perception that *p*. But the subjective indistinguishability of perception and illusion seems to mean that I *cannot* know by reflection whether I am perceiving *p* or merely have an illusion of *p*. And if this is true, then I cannot know that I am warranted in believing that *p*, in which case I cannot be said to *know* that *p* even if I *perceive p*.

Of course, one way of getting out of this skeptical bind would be to deny the internalist intuition, that is, to claim that I do not need to know that I am warranted in my belief for that belief to count as knowledge. But epistemological disjunctivism does not take this route. Pritchard and McDowell are agreed that I do not have knowledge in virtue simply of, for example, reliable belief-forming capacities, but rather in virtue of reasons that I can give.[29] This,

after all, is what makes epistemological disjunctivism *rationalist*, in my sense: it holds that perception is a reason that warrants beliefs about the world. Now, McDowell writes that what warrants a belief about the external world are facts about our mental states (e.g., that we perceive); and he claims that a mental state is "a kind of fact whose obtaining our self-consciously possessed perceptual capacities enable us to recognize on suitable occasions."[30] In other words, McDowell holds a reflective accessibility claim, according to which, if I perceive *p*, then I can know that I perceive *p*, *even though* perceptions are often introspectively indistinguishable from illusions. So disjunctivists don't reject internalism. Therefore, they will need some additional premise to block the skeptical inference.

I think the best candidate for this additional premise is a McDowellian view that I will term "modified internalism." This view issues from McDowell's rejection of what he calls the "interiorization of the space of reasons," namely, the belief that one's standing in the space of reasons (whether or not one is justified) depends solely on factors interior to the mind, for example, whatever rules of reasoning one follows. Against this view, McDowell holds that one's standing in the space of reasons—whether or not one has warrant for belief—is not independent of facts about the world. As he puts it, "That the world does someone the necessary favor, on a given occasion, of being the way it appears to be is not extra to the person's standing in the space of reasons."[31] In brief, modified internalism holds that *only if p*, then I am warranted in believing that *p*. Knowledge does not consist in warrant *plus* the world doing us the favor of being as it appears. Rather, a belief is warranted only if the world does us the favor of being as it appears. Thus, to know something really just requires that my belief be warranted, where this warrant itself depends on the world being as it appears.

It follows that we should reject what McDowell calls the Cartesian picture of the mind, on which the mind is fully transparent to itself. In contrast, to know, to be warranted, and ultimately to perceive, all require a contribution from the world, namely, that it be as it appears.[32] Mental states (knowledge, ignorance, perception, illusion) are as opaque or transparent to us as the world itself, which is why perceptions can be introspectively indistinguishable from illusions. In other words, to know what mental state I am in cannot rely simply on any subjectively available feature of that mental state. Instead, this knowledge relies on facts about the external world. This, I take it, is why if I perceive *p*, then I can know that I perceive *p*, even if this perception is introspectively indistinguishable from an illusion.[33] And if we have this claim,

it seems we can indeed provide a rejoinder to the skeptic without sacrificing internalism altogether.[34]

Now, can such a view be said to be Merleau-Ponty's? First, it should be said that given the account of disjunctivism with which I began, there is no doubt that Merleau-Ponty is a disjunctivist. He writes, for example, "The difference between illusion and perception is intrinsic" (*PhP*, 310). Elsewhere, he claims that what is "new and valuable" in the (otherwise mistaken) intellectualist analysis of hallucination is "the essential difference that it establishes between perception and hallucination" (*PhP*, 352). More specifically, as we saw in the previous section, Merleau-Ponty thinks that perceptions and illusions have different horizonal structures. Further, Merleau-Ponty insists that perceptions are veridical in a way that illusions are not: "There can be no question of maintaining the certainty of perception by denying the certainty of the perceived thing. If I see an *ashtray in the full sense of the word 'see*,' then there must be an ashtray over there" (*PhP*, 393).

And the agreement between the two goes further. Because of the intrinsic distinction he draws between perception and illusion, Merleau-Ponty agrees with McDowell's rejection of the Cartesian picture of mind, on which the mind would be entirely transparent to itself.[35] As we have just seen, Merleau-Ponty thinks there is no option of separating a kind of certainty we might have about the mind (the certainty that I perceive) from a certainty about the extramental (certainty about the object of perception). Perception is veridical, and this means I cannot be sure that I perceive a tree while being uncertain about the tree itself. Consequently, we are equally capable of error about our own states of mind as we are about the world. Merleau-Ponty writes, "There is no sphere of immanence or no domain where my consciousness would be at home and assured against all risk of error" (*PhP*, 395).

But while Merleau-Ponty is a disjunctivist, he is not an *epistemological* disjunctivist. The prima facie reason for this is that Merleau-Ponty seems clearly to deny a natural conclusion of epistemological disjunctivism: its claim that perception justifies knowledge of particular facts about the world. For McDowell, disjunctivism secures knowledge of such facts (e.g., it allows us to say that "I know there is a zebra when I see a zebra"). Certainly, I can be mistaken in *taking myself* to know that there is a zebra—but this doesn't impair my knowledge if I have it.[36] In contrast, we have seen that while Merleau-Ponty does aim to secure certain kinds of knowledge from skepticism, he thinks that we cannot secure knowledge of particular facts about the world, only knowledge of the world in general. He writes,

"Illusion does not separate me from truth. But . . . I am not protected from error since the world that I aim at through each experience . . . never necessarily requires this particular appearance. There is an absolute certainty of the world in general, but not of any particular thing" (*PhP*, 311). For Merleau-Ponty, then, we have an ontic uncertainty—uncertainty about particular facts about the world—that is of a piece with an ontological certainty: certainty about the world itself. In fact, with regard to ontic knowledge, Merleau-Ponty sounds quite a bit like the skeptic. He seems to think that the local indistinguishability of perception from illusion entails the skeptical conclusion, claiming that "the thing seen is never absolutely certain (as is shown by illusion)" (*PhP*, 420). Thus, while Merleau-Ponty joins McDowell in resisting skepticism, he also resists McDowell's claim that we can secure ontic knowledge from the skeptic.[37]

If this is true, then we might expect Merleau-Ponty also to reject McDowell's claim that if I am having a perception, I can know that I am having a perception. And, indeed, Merleau-Ponty does reject this claim, since, as we saw, he holds that there is no sphere of immanence where we are free from the risk of error. Further, he writes, "If hallucinations are to be possible, consciousness must at some moment cease to know what it does" (*PhP*, 360). This is not to say that, for Merleau-Ponty, we do not have reflective access to our mental states, just that we cannot secure *knowledge* about them, which is McDowell's claim.[38] Thus, Merleau-Ponty denies that we can secure ontic knowledge from the skeptic, and since he joins McDowell in resisting the Cartesian picture of mind, he ends up also denying that we can secure ontic knowledge about our own mental states from skepticism.[39]

But, if Merleau-Ponty accepts disjunctivism, why does he not reach the same conclusion as McDowell? The reason for this discrepancy, I think, lies in McDowell's modified internalism, on which his response to skepticism depends. According to this view, if my warrant depends on facts about the external world, then if we are in the good case (if p, and some set of conditions are met), then I perceive p and know that p. But Merleau-Ponty would not accept this claim. This is because Merleau-Ponty in fact rejects accounts on which facts about our consciousness are as external to us as facts about the world.

In the "Cogito" chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty suggests two options posed by his claim that perception is veridical: either we have no certainty about perceived things and are equally uncertain about our mental states, *or* we are certain about our mental states, and so, too, about the

perceived things. He rejects both solutions, holding that the second would require the Cartesian picture of mind he rejects, and that the first would make our states of consciousness extrinsic to our mind. He writes that if we accept the first, "thought would be cut off from itself and there would no longer be anything but 'facts of consciousness,' which may well be called 'inner' through a nominal definition, but which would remain for me just as opaque as things. In other words, there would no longer be either interiority or consciousness, and the experience of the *Cogito* would once again be lost" (*PhP*, 420). That is, for Merleau-Ponty, an account that reduces our self-knowledge to knowledge of facts about the external world offers a merely nominal description of interiority or reflective accessibility, since it defines reflective accessibility in terms extrinsic to consciousness.

I think one, admittedly somewhat crude, way of registering this point is as follows: McDowell adopts a third-person rather than a first-person epistemic point of view. According to McDowell, self-knowledge is dependent on facts about the external world. If we are in the good case, and the world is as it appears, then one has a perception and knows as much; if not, then not. But this information—whether we are in the good case or the bad case (if I am having a hallucination)—is necessarily not available from the perspective of the knower; it is available only from a third-person point of view. Assuming the subjective indistinguishability of perception and illusion, the knower *cannot* establish whether she is in the good case, that is, whether she is having a perception, since (a) this information depends on facts about the world; (b) these facts, in turn, can be known only through perception; and (c) this perception is just what is in question. For Merleau-Ponty, in making reflective accessibility dependent on facts about the world, McDowell has described reflective accessibility from a third-person viewpoint—this is what Merleau-Ponty means when he writes that such a view reduces thought to "facts of consciousness."

That epistemological disjunctivism adopts a third-person epistemic perspective becomes clear if we consider McDowell's claim that epistemological disjunctivism is not intended to defend any particular appearance from the skeptic. He claims that "there is no need to establish, without begging questions against skepticism, that in any particular case of perceptual experience we actually are in the favourable epistemic position that skepticism suggests we could never be in."[40] What this means is that McDowell does not take himself to secure, in the case of any given perceptual experience, that it is a knowledge-yielding perception. As we have seen, he *does*, however, take himself to secure that for any case in which one is in fact having a perception,

then one has knowledge. Thus, by McDowell's own admission, epistemological disjunctivism does not allow me to know that I am in fact in the favorable case, and so does not allow *me* to know that I have knowledge. It allows me to know only that I *may* well have knowledge.

In contrast, Merleau-Ponty describes reflective accessibility in first-person terms. He claims that "there is nothing in [consciousness] that is not in some way announced to it, even though it has no need of knowing it explicitly. . . . The difference between perception and illusion is intrinsic, and the truth of perception can only be read in perception itself" (*PhP*, 310). So, Merleau-Ponty thinks that there must be *some* subjectively discriminable feature that distinguishes perception from illusion—namely, the differences in the horizonal content of those experiences. Nor does this claim rule out fallibility, understood to mean that we often do in fact fail to distinguish perceptions from illusions. It just rules out the idea that there are *no* subjectively *available* features that distinguish perception from illusion. Merleau-Ponty can accommodate both these points, since he differentiates between the implicit and the explicit dimensions of experience. The structural features that distinguish perceptions need not be explicit to the subject, they need be *available* only for reflective access, which they can do by being implicit features of experience (e.g., horizonal features).

Merleau-Ponty evidently thinks it is an advantage of his view that it allows us to preserve what I am calling a first-person epistemic perspective. And there are good reasons to agree with him on this point. In particular, he is right that if we adopt a third-person perspective, then we lose sight of the role of reflection in knowledge. Consider the disparity between refection in good and bad cases. In the good case, my belief has rational support that I know about through reflection. But the opposite cannot be said in the bad case: in the bad case, I still take myself to know by reflection that my belief has rational support, even though it does not. So, while in the good case I can know by reflection that my belief has rational support, I cannot know, in the bad case, that my belief lacks rational support. In other words, on this account, reflection doesn't actually track justification. This, in turn, makes it seem that when we are in the good case, and reflection assures us that we have rational support for a belief, that reflection merely happens to be right; it is right in the way that a broken clock is said to be right twice a day. But surely this kind of reflective accessibility cannot be called internalist. The intuition underlying internalism is just that we need to have some kind of reflective accessibility to the reason supporting a belief in order to know, rather than to make a lucky guess. But if reflection turns out not to track

our reasons, then it's hard to see how we are any better off than if we were making a lucky guess. In contrast, if we held a view that having reflective access to rational support requires that we have some means of distinguishing perceptions from illusions (i.e., that our reflection actually tracks our mental states), then this problem would be avoided. So, it is not clear to me that, even from a third-person perspective, epistemological disjunctivism can secure the kind of knowledge it means to.

Pritchard seems to me actually to respond to something like this issue in terms of what he calls the "Distinguishability Problem." Pritchard formulates the "Distinguishability Problem" as a problem of squaring the reflective accessibility of a factive reason like perception, with its indistinguishability from a nonfactive (and non-warrant-providing) reason like illusion. It seems that, if it is reflectively accessible that I am having a perception, I should be able to distinguish perceptions from illusions.

Pritchard's response is complex, and treating it fully would require a lengthy discursion. For my purposes, suffice it to say that Pritchard's response relies on a distinction between motivated and nonmotivated but merely possible alternatives.[41] If I have good reason to doubt that I am having a perception that *p*, then the possible alternatives to *p* (and so to my having a perception that *p*) are motivated; if not, then these alternatives are merely possible. Now, according to Pritchard, if an alternative is merely possible and not motivated, then I merely need "favoring" evidence to rule out that alternative. In other words, I need only appeal to considerations that mitigate against this possibility, rather than needing to be in a position to perceptually discriminate between my experience and a corresponding illusion. According to Pritchard, having a reflectively accessible and factive rational support for my belief suffices as favoring evidence.[42] If I can have reflective access to my perception that *p*, and that perception is factive, then *p*, from which it follows that the alternatives to *p* must be false. As Pritchard puts it, "If one has no epistemic basis for taking the error-possibility seriously, then the mere fact that one is in possession of such a factive rational support ought to suffice to enable one to rationally exclude such a possibility and thereby know that it does not obtain."[43]

This response might answer the "Distinguishability Problem"—it might, in other words, show that reflective access to one's reasons does not require perceptions and illusions to be subjectively distinguishable. But I think the problem with this approach becomes obvious if we consider how hollow it will ring to the skeptic. If the skeptic asks, "How do you know that you are not having an illusion that *p*?," Pritchard's response is, "Because I have a

reflectively accessible factive reason for *p*, namely that I see that *p*. And this entails that *p*. Consequently, I can rule out the possibility that I am having an illusion that *p*." But there is no reason why the skeptic should find this response compelling, since it assumes precisely what is in question. The skeptic will have to ask: "How do you know that you really do have a reflectively accessible factive reason for *p*?" The claim to having a reflectively accessible factive reason does very little to change the dialectical situation. The whole problem I described above remains, which is that if we separate reflective access from subjective distinguishability, then reflection ceases to track our reasons and so remains "reflection" in a merely nominal sense.

In sum, Merleau-Ponty is not an epistemological disjunctivist. His response to skepticism achieves a different goal than does the epistemological disjunctivist's and for different reasons. Further, Merleau-Ponty would think that epistemological disjunctivism obscures what is genuine in the "Cogito" (i.e., makes us lose sight of what reflection actually entails), and this point turns out to have considerable merit.

In this chapter, I have made three claims:

1. The relation between perception and belief in that perception is motivated.
2. The relation between perception and belief in that perception is not justificatory (not even in the manner described by epistemological disjunctivism).
3. The relation between perception and belief in that perception is not merely explanatory.

Again, the positive account here—that perceptual faith is motivated—is that the relation between perception and our beliefs belongs to the spontaneous and implicit meaningfulness and normativity of the body. Our belief in what we see is prior to the explicit giving and taking of reasons, and instead relies on the world's solicitation of our belief. In this sense, perceptual faith is awake to the normative dimension of perceptual field, and not merely causal. Part of what it means to see, at least in normal vision, is to experience belief as a requirement: when I round the corner and the tree stands before me, I find myself bound—it is right to give my faith to this appearance, and it would be wrong not to.

By rejecting an interpretation of perceptual faith in terms of either explanation or justification, Merleau-Ponty avoids both a skepticism and a rationalism. Instead, we are left with a picture of our belief in the perceptual world as motivated—not as proven, but as a sort of faith called for, and in this sense normed, by the world. As I pointed out above, this perceptual faith (itself motivated) can in turn motivate judgments about the existence of the perceived (as described in chapter 3). More fundamentally, however, perceptual faith is a condition for *any* judgment about the perceived. Were I not to trust in my perception, that perception would be motivationally inert. If, for example, I did not spontaneously believe in the being of the perceived tree, I could not judge, "The tree exists," but much less that "the tree is yellow," "the tree is shedding its leaves," et cetera. Perceptual faith, then, is the condition on which the perceived has normative import for our judgments. And if this is true, we must say that at the foundation of our knowledge lies a credence that is fundamentally unjustified, but motivated.

But what has this description accomplished? We have not justified perceptual faith, nor offered a reconstruction of perceptual faith that would allow it an implicit justification. Merleau-Ponty eschews such a project as the very error made by reflective philosophies. And it would be equally erroneous to think that we have merely explained our belief in the world or offered a simple description of the fact of our credence. Such a project would not be epistemological at all: it would be a psychology of knowledge.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the task of philosophy, rather than justifying or describing the perceptual faith, is to return to it (e.g., *VI*, 158). This is not exactly a question of simple coincidence with prephilosophical perceptual faith. In giving expression to the perceptual faith, philosophy transforms or takes up the latter anew: philosophy "does not seek to analyze our relationship with the world, to *undo* it as if it had been formed by assemblage; but it also does not terminate by an immediate and all-inclusive acknowledgement of Being" (*VI*, 100; see also *VI*, 122). Instead, according to Merleau-Ponty, the task of phenomenology is to "assist at the birth" of knowledge (*PrP*, 25), albeit even as knowledge is already well advanced in years. Such an assistance—if it has a definite goal—does no more than restore to the hidden motives of knowledge their weight, and by understanding them, it participates in them more fully. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty claims that "philosophy is the perceptual faith questioning itself about itself" (*VI*, 103). The promised "remedy to skepticism" here, I take it, is only to give perceptual faith—which bears us into the world not without reservation—its proper place and rights.

PART III

Motivation and Pure Reason

CHAPTER 6

TRANSCENDENTAL JUSTIFICATION

My aim in the previous five chapters has been to show that Merleau-Ponty, and phenomenology generally, provides an alternative to rationalist and empiricist conceptions of the relation between experience and knowledge. However, Kant's project could be described in these same terms. Kant is not an empiricist about knowledge, insofar as he thinks a priori knowledge is possible and that an empirical deduction of the categories cannot secure their validity. Nor is he a rationalist: Kant's primary goal, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[1] is to offer a critique of reason's claims to knowledge independent of all experience.

At the same time, Kant's position seems clearly to differ from Merleau-Ponty's in ways that leave the account of knowledge I have provided in jeopardy. In brief, Kant suggests a sense of the a priori that is incompatible with the description I gave in chapter 4 of an a priori founded on experience.[2] He develops a line of argumentation—transcendental argumentation—according to which certain structures of the understanding can be *known* or *justified* a priori. These structures are not justified on the basis of any actual experience, but as conditions for the possibility of experience. If there were such justification, then there would be a clear sense in which some kinds of knowledge are not grounded in actual experience, and the whole analysis of a priori knowledge provided in chapter 4 would be shown false. So, Kant's alternative resolution of the empiricism-rationalism debate would rule out the picture I have been developing. To secure this picture, then, it will be necessary to turn our attention from the classical debate between empiricism and rationalism and toward the resolution that was given to it by Kant's transcendental philosophy.

The reader might wonder whether a discussion of Kant is strictly necessary to the project of this book. After all, I have already forwarded a Merleau-Pontian program for epistemology. I have situated this program with respect to its major historical and contemporary alternatives, and shown how it can

answer a variety of epistemological questions, including those about perceptual knowledge, a priori knowledge, and skepticism. But, aside from the pressing systematic concern I have just indicated, there are two further reasons why it is important to situate Merleau-Ponty's position with respect to Kant. The first is that Merleau-Ponty himself, throughout the *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*, frames his philosophy as a correction to what he calls "reflective philosophy," of which Kant is a chief exemplar. If we wish fully to understand what Merleau-Ponty took as the results of his work, then, we need to understand how he surpasses the position he took himself to critique. Second, undertaking this critique of Kant will open up an essential question, namely, the question of metaphysical knowledge. Ever since Kant, at least in traditions that grapple with Kant's legacy, the status of metaphysical thinking has been in question. We will have to ask, then, where Merleau-Ponty's critique of Kant leaves this peculiar kind of a priori knowledge. Given these considerations, it would be an oversight to conclude this work without considering Merleau-Ponty's relation to Kant.

My claim in this chapter will be that there are two reasons to think that Kant's alternative account of a priori knowledge is not, in fact, so threatening to my Merleau-Pontian account.[3] First, as I have argued elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty and Kant mean different things by "experience."[4] Whereas Kant understands experience as empirical judgment, Merleau-Ponty understands it as perception (i.e., the pre-predicative givenness of a thing). Further, these different senses of experience correspond to different descriptions of the normativity involved in experience. Whereas Kant measures experience with the standard of justification, Merleau-Ponty measures it with the standard of motivation. The view I have been developing in this book does not deny that there is empirical judgment, nor refuse it the standard of justification—in phenomenological terms, these two levels of experience might correspond to something like Heidegger's distinction between *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit*—it just denies that these terms are sufficient to comprehend perception (and the bond between perception and judgment). If I'm right to draw this distinction, then there is nothing contradictory in allowing that Kant can plausibly describe conditions for the possibility of experience in *his* sense, without describing conditions for the possibility of perception as I have understood it in this book. The consequence of allowing this compatibility, however, is that a priori knowledge is not justified in terms of conditions for *perception*.

Second, not only is a priori knowledge not justified in terms of conditions for perception, but I will argue that perception is a condition for any

transcendental justification. In my view, Kant's account of a priori justification relies on an insight into the general structure of perceptual experience, which cannot be justified a priori in the manner Kant lays out. Instead, these structures must be described as a priori in the sense I defined in chapter 4, namely, as motivated in the course of experience. Consequently, all a priori knowledge remains grounded on perception.

But before I get into these arguments, let me first be clear about how I understand the position I will be responding to, namely, Kant's account of a priori knowledge.

KANT'S ACCOUNT OF A PRIORI SYNTHETIC KNOWLEDGE

Consider Kant's description of the Transcendental Deduction. Kant famously begins the Deduction by distinguishing between a question about fact (the *quaestio facti*) and a question about right (the *quaestio iuris*). Whereas the former is concerned with establishing what is actually the case, the latter is concerned with establishing a right or entitlement (i.e., a justification). It is the latter sort of question with which a deduction is concerned: a deduction of the categories entails a demonstration that we are justified in using them, in the sense that they are objectively valid, that is, that they can be used to cognize objects.

Further, a *transcendental* deduction aims to justify a concept a priori. One might attempt to justify a concept's use by showing how that concept is derived from experience. Such a deduction would be empirical. For example, Kant claims that we can always use experience to prove the objective reality of our empirical concepts (*CPR*, B 117). A transcendental deduction, in contrast, aims to provide a justification that does not rely on experience. We need such a deduction for the categories, since experience is just not the kind of thing that *could* justify the categories, for much the same reasons considered in chapter 4: experience cannot provide the necessity that cognition of the categories entails. An empirical deduction would ultimately do no more than *explain* the fact of our possession of the categories—Kant claims that such a deduction is useful only in the sphere of the "explanation of our *possession* of a pure cognition" (*CPR*, B 119) (i.e., would amount only to an answer to the *quaestio facti*).[5] The idea of a transcendental deduction, then, turns on the distinction between justification and explanation, which is at the core of this book. Experience, according to Kant, can at most serve as

an *explanation* of our possession of the categories; it does nothing to *justify* our use of them.

At the same time, experience does play a critical role in the justification of the categories. Kant differs from his rationalist predecessors insofar as he argues that only on the basis of experience can the categories be shown to have objective validity. As Kant puts it, "Experience, as empirical synthesis, is in [regard to] its possibility the only kind of cognition that provides reality to all other synthesis. By the same token, this latter synthesis, as a priori cognition, has truth (agreement with the object) only because it contains nothing more than what is necessary for synthetic unity of experience as such" (*CPR*, B 196–97). That is to say, experience plays a critical role in the justification of our a priori synthetic knowledge—just not with respect to its *actuality*. Instead, the categories are transcendentally deduced as conditions for the *possibility* of experience. Kant writes, "The transcendental deduction of all *a priori* concepts has a principle to which the entire investigation must be directed: viz., the principle that these concepts must be cognized as a priori conditions for the possibility of experience" (*CPR*, B 126). So, what makes a priori synthesis possible, according to Kant, is experience in regard to its *possibility*. But how does Kant reach this conclusion?

Analytic judgments are licensed simply in terms of the concepts they synthesize. According to Kant, in judging that "all bodies are extended," I am merely elucidating the content of the concept "body." In contrast, synthetic judgments are "ampliatory"; they require something outside of their concepts to license them. In the case of empirical truths, such as "It's raining," this "something else" is clearly my experience of the weather. But what is this something else in the case of a priori synthetic judgments? The formal condition of truth, noncontradiction, is not enough to answer this question (as it was in the case of analytic judgments), because a synthetic judgment can be both non-self-contradictory and fail to agree with its object (there is nothing contradictory about my judging that the sky is green—it is simply wrong to do so). On the other hand, experience can license only particular judgments, not *necessary* and *universal* ones. So, we are left with Kant's guiding question in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "How are synthetic judgments possible a priori?" (B 19).

Kant answers, as we have seen, in terms of experience, just not with regard to its actuality (which licenses only a posteriori judgments), but with regard to its possibility: "The *possibility of experience* is what provides all our a priori cognitions with objective reality" (*CPR*, B 195). Certain cognitions are

necessary conditions for the possibility of experience, and because we have experience, we know these cognitions (because they are necessary conditions) to be true *necessarily*. Cognitions that are necessary for the possibility of experience can be known a priori (because they are not derived from experience but instead make experience possible) and synthetic (because they are licensed by a "something else," namely, the possibility of experience).

There is a core move, common to the transcendental aesthetic, the transcendental deduction of the categories, and Kant's account of the synthetic principles: each justifies a certain sort of cognition as a cognition of a structure that is a condition for the possibility of the experience that we do actually possess. As I see it, this move is the characteristic feature of transcendental argumentation. A transcendental argument, beginning with the given features of ordinary experience, deduces the transcendental conditions of these features; it moves from the conditioned (our experience) to its condition (transcendental laws); from what is first for us (experience) to what is first in itself (the transcendental).

Again, this view seems to pose a serious threat to my account. If some propositions can be known qua conditions for the possibility of experience, then experience is not (at least in the relevant sense) the ground of all knowledge. Merleau-Ponty's "primacy of perception" thesis would be shown false. So, let me now turn to my responses to this threat: (1) Kant may describe conditions for experience in the sense of justified empirical judgment, but not in the sense of perception; and (2) Kant's account of the a priori actually depends on Merleau-Ponty's.

EXPERIENCE IN KANT

Let us turn to the first of these: Kant does not describe conditions for the possibility of "perception," at least in the sense in which I have been using that word. The core move of my argument for this interpretation is that Kant and Merleau-Ponty mean different things by "experience": Merleau-Ponty means "perception," and Kant means "empirical judgment." We already have a sufficient sense, from chapters 1 and 2, of what Merleau-Ponty means by "perception," and how he distinguishes it from "judgment." So, instead, I will focus here on my reasons for thinking that Kant understands experience as empirical judgment. In brief, my argument is that Kant makes the following three claims, which together imply that experience is empirical judgment:

1. Experience is empirical cognition.[6]

Kant frequently defines "experience" in these terms. For example, he begins the proof for the Analogies of Experience as follows: "Experience [*Erfahrung*] is an empirical cognition [*Erkenntnis*], i.e., a cognition that determines an object through perceptions [*Wahrnehmungen*]" (*CPR*, B 218).[7]

2. Empirical cognitions have objective purport.

Consider Kant's definition of "cognition" in the *Stufenleiter*: "Under [the genus 'presentation'] falls presentation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A perception [*Perception*] that refers solely to the subject, viz., as the modification of the subject's state, is *sensation* [*Empfindung*] (*sensatio*); an objective perception [*Perzeption*] is *cognition* [*Erkenntnis*] (*cognitio*)" (*CPR*, B 376). Thus, in writing that experience is empirical *cognition*, he means that experience is a conscious presentation referring to an object. As I understand it, this is just another way of saying that a cognition is a conscious presentation having objective purport.

3. Only judgments have objective purport.

Kant follows up the just cited passage from the *Stufenleiter* with the following sentence: "Cognition is either *intuition* or *concept* (*intuitus vel conceptus*)" (*CPR*, B 376). Thus, according to Kant, both intuitions and concepts are presentations that refer to objects. This might lead one to think that a mere intuition, absent input from the understanding (from the faculty of judgment), could suffice to provide a presentation with objective purport. However, while intuition is perception referring to the object, it by itself can give only a manifold, not a unitary object, and not a unity of experience as a whole. In order to have anything like an *experience* with objective purport, there needs to be some combination of the manifold, where that combination itself has objective purport. But, as Kant claims at the beginning of the B-Deduction, "A manifold's *combination* (*conjunctio*) as such can never come to us through the senses" (*CPR*, B 129). Instead, then, it must come through concepts, or rather the faculty that operates on concepts: Kant writes, "Combination is an act of the understanding" (*CPR*, B 130).

As I understand it, the problem is actually more sophisticated than this. The real issue is that, insofar as everything in space and time is, in the transcendental sense, an appearance or presentation, it is not immediately obvious how there can be such a thing as an object of experience. This is a problem about truth itself: if in experience we have only to do with our presentations,

then there is nothing outside our presentations with which to compare our presentations. And if this is the case, it seems that there can be no such thing as empirical truth, for truth as the tradition has understood it is just correspondence between our presentations (cognitions) and the object outside of our cognitions.[8] Kant's solution to this problem is to say that there is an object of experience insofar as our presentations are governed by rules, and that empirical truth will be defined as correspondence between our presentations and those rules. Thus, in the A-Deduction, Kant writes, "When we have brought about synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition—this is when we say that we cognize the object. This unity is impossible, however, unless the intuition can be produced according to a rule through a [certain] function of synthesis, viz., a function of synthesis that makes the reproduction of the manifold necessary a priori and makes possible a concept in which this manifold is united. . . . And the concept of this unity is the presentation of the object $= x$" (*CPR*, A 105). So, it must instead be through the application of concepts and the synthesis of cognitions via the categories (i.e., through the understanding) that the manifold of intuition is synthesized into unitary objects and ultimately into a coherent whole of experience. In other words, it is only through the understanding that there is anything like an object of experience, that experience has objective purport. So, we can provisionally conclude that cognitions refer to objects in virtue of the understanding. And Kant explicitly defines the understanding as "a power of judgment," writing that "all acts of the understanding can be reduced to judgments" (*CPR*, B 94). So, it seems that only judgment can supply our experience with objective purport.

However, there is a threat to this straightforward argument. Intuitions, and cognitions generally, can be synthesized by the understanding in judgments, but also by the imagination in associations. Kant distinguishes these options in §19 of the B-Deduction, writing,

> Suppose that I inquire more precisely into the [relation or] reference of given cognitions in every judgment, and that I distinguish it, as belonging to the understanding, from the relation in terms of laws of the reproductive imagination (a relation that has only subjective validity). I then find that a judgment is nothing but a way of bringing given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception. This is what the little relational word *is* in judgments intends [to indicate], in order to distinguish the objective unity of given presentations from the subjective one. (*CPR*, B 141–42)

Kant specifies that it is only because a *judgment* is referred to the *necessary unity* of apperception (i.e., the original or transcendental unity, as opposed to the empirical) that it is valid objectively. In contrast, the imagination combines presentations according to laws of association, which are empirical, and so have only subjective validity. What is given empirically will, as a matter of fact, be combined in a variety of different ways: "One person will link the presentation of a certain word with one thing, another with some other thing" (*CPR*, B 140). Whatever laws of association an individual applies in their reproductive imagination to associate two presentations is contingent, a habit they have developed empirically through repeatedly finding one presentation linked with another. Thus, this empirical unity is a subjective unity that is only "a *determination of inner sense*" that "through association of presentations, itself concerns an appearance and is entirely contingent" (*CPR*, B 139–40). So, it is through only the understanding, and the necessity it provides with rules, that we can present an object (i.e., that our experiences can have objective purport). This, according to Kant, is the significance of the copula in judgments: in judgment we can say, "Bodies are heavy," but all we can say according to the imagination is, "When I support a body, then I feel a pressure of heaviness" (*CPR*, B 142). In other words, the reproductive imagination is capable only of a subjective validity because it can only combine presentations in perception of the "subject's state" (*CPR*, B 142): when I support the body I have the *sensation*—a perception of my subjective state—of heaviness.

To be clear, what judgment, and the categories generally, establish is not that our presentations are correct, but that they have objective purport at all. Kant writes that "the reference to this necessary unity [of apperception] is there even if the judgment itself is empirical and hence contingent—e.g., Bodies are heavy. By this I do not mean that these presentations belong *necessarily to one another* in the empirical intuition. Rather, I mean that they belong to one another *by virtue of the necessary unity* of apperception in the synthesis of intuitions" (*CPR*, B 142). In particular, empirical judgments—made by particular, empirical subjects—presentations do not come together in any necessary way, and so such judgments can err. However, in particular, empirical judgments, presentations *do* belong to one another according to necessary laws (ultimately, the unity of apperception), and so these presentations have objective purport.[9]

Thus, Kant concludes that objective purport can come only from judgments. If we put this together with points 1 and 2, we reach the following conclusion:

4. An experience is an empirical judgment.

If the previous three statements are rightly attributed to Kant, I do not see how this conclusion could not be. And, indeed, Kant suggests as much. He writes, for example, in the Second Analogy, "If my perception is to contain the cognition of an event, i.e., of something's actually occurring, then it must be an empirical judgment in which we think of the consequence as determined, i.e., as presupposing in terms of time another appearance that it succeeds necessarily, or according to a rule" (*CPR*, B 246–47). Here Kant explicitly claims that any empirical cognition (i.e., any experience) must *be* an empirical judgment. Or, in a note from around 1788–90, Kant defines "experience": "The judgment which expresses an empirical cognition is experience."[10] So, Kant does seem to understand experience as empirical judgment.

What may not yet be clear is the critical role that the dichotomy of justification and explanation plays in this argument. As I understand it, Kant's view is that *only* if I am justified in synthesizing a manifold in a particular manner, am I entitled to think this synthesis has objective purport. For example, in the Second Analogy, Kant argues that absent the understanding, I can be "conscious only that my imagination places one state before and the other after, but not that the one state precedes the other in the object" (*CPR*, B 233). In other words, the imagination and its laws of association at most *explain* how I synthesize the manifold, but this tells me nothing about the object itself. I would need a faculty that does more than explain my synthesis, namely, one that *justifies* it, in order to say something about the object. And this would have to be a faculty of rules that necessitates a particular synthesis of the manifold. Kant writes, "The mere succession in my apprehension, if it is not determined by a rule by reference to something preceding it, justifies [*berechtigt*] no succession in the object" (*CPR*, B 240).[11] Without this kind of necessity, which *entitles* me to claim objective purport, we are no better than dreaming: "If I posited what precedes and the event did not succeed it necessarily, then I would have to regard this event as only a subjective play of my imaginings; and if I still presented by it something objective, then I would have to call it a mere dream" (*CPR*, B 247).

The dichotomy of subjective and objective synthesis, imagination and understanding, corresponds, then, to the dichotomy of explanation and justification. The imagination no more than explains our synthesis, such that the latter is subjective; in contrast, the understanding justifies it, such that the latter is objective. Thus, we can define the general structure of Kant's arguments as follows:

1. Our synthesis of the manifold must follow certain rules [the categories and synthetic principles] if it is to be necessary.
2. Our synthesis of the manifold must be necessary if it is to be justified.
3. Our synthesis of the manifold must be justified if it is to be objective. So:
4. Our synthesis of the manifold must follow certain rules if it is to be objective.

In sum, Kant both means something different by "experience" than does Merleau-Ponty and attributes a different standard to experience than does Merleau-Ponty (i.e., justification as opposed to motivation). If this interpretation is correct, then the two seem neither to conflict nor agree, but simply to be working at different levels of analysis.

CONDITIONS FOR PERCEPTION

For Merleau-Ponty, perception is not a judgment—it is the pre-predicative givenness of the thing. So, Kant's understanding of experience is not shared by Merleau-Ponty. This is not to deny that we do make empirical judgments; it's just that such judgments are not all we have in the way of experience. Assuming, then, that Kant does show the categories and synthetic principles to be conditions for the possibility of *empirical judgment*, it hardly follows that he has shown them to be conditions for the possibility of perception. And, indeed, there is good reason to think the categories and synthetic principles are not conditions for perception.

Once we see that Kant and Merleau-Ponty approach experience with different standards, it is easy enough to appreciate why this is so. If the general form of argument given above is a fair characterization of Kant's view, then we have reason to think that our synthesis of the manifold observes the categories and synthetic principles only if we assume that this synthesis must be justified in order to be objective. But I have been denying that the grounding processes characteristic of perception must be justificatory in order to be objective. As we have seen in previous chapters, motivation can explain perception's objective purport perfectly well, without resorting to the categories or synthetic principles. In this sense, perception is immune to the form of argument I have attributed to Kant.

Again, it might seem natural to think that Merleau-Ponty's account conflicts with Kant's in this respect. But if Kant and Merleau-Ponty really are describing distinct levels of experience, there is no reason to think that Merleau-Ponty's denial that the categories are conditions for perception implies they are not conditions for making justified empirical judgments.

Let's consider how these general points play out with respect to two examples: the Second Analogy and the axioms of intuition.

Consider, first, Kant's argument in the Second Analogy. There, Kant argues for the "principle of temporal succession according to the law of causality," namely, that "all changes occur according to the law of the connection of cause and effect" (*CPR*, B 232) (i.e., the principle of sufficient reason). Kant begins from the straightforward insight that we experience objective time orders. When—to use Kant's example—I see a boat floating downriver, I take it that the boat itself has over time moved from one position to the next. This succession is not merely a contingent, and so subjective, feature of my apprehension of the boat, the way that my perspectival apprehension of a table as I walk around it is; rather, it is in the objects themselves, or, it is an event. In the Second Analogy, Kant asks how it is possible that we experience objective time orders. After all, through intuition we are given only a temporal manifold, which can be organized in a variety of manners. Under what conditions, then, can an organization be called objective?[12]

According to Kant, the imagination does not suffice to provide organizations of temporal manifolds with objectivity. Because the imagination organizes this manifold according to laws of association, the organization it produces is contingent (*CPR*, B 223–24). The imagination could just as well present the boat floating upstream, or jumping back and forth, for that matter. Consequently, the imagination cannot distinguish between succession that is in the object and succession that is only in the subject. Transcendentally speaking, imagination does not suffice to provide our experiences with objective purport.

Since neither intuition nor imagination can provide for this objective purport, the understanding must. It does this by providing the rules for the organization of the temporal manifold, namely, that all changes occur according to the law of cause and effect. If we can identify a causal law governing a temporal succession, then this succession has a necessary sequence. For example, we are required to portray the boat as initially upstream and subsequently downstream by the fact that the boat is *caused* to float downstream by the force of the river. Since only such a causal law allows me to synthesize

the temporal manifold in a necessary manner, and only a necessary synthesis is objective, the causal law is what allows me to experience an objective time order. Or, at the transcendental level, it is only because any experience of change is governed by causality (even if on particular occasions I am not cognizant of the causal law in question) that this experience can be of an event (i.e., have objective purport).

But while this argument plausibly shows that causality (and with it the principle of sufficient reason) is a necessary condition for empirical judgments about objective time order, Merleau-Ponty gives us good reason to think that it is not a necessary condition for the *perception* of objective time order. That is because Merleau-Ponty gives an account of how our organization of temporal succession is normed by a passive temporal synthesis. As a consequence of this account of time order, Merleau-Ponty denies that we face the problem about the constitution of objective experience that Kant solves with the principle of sufficient reason.

I've written elsewhere about how exactly we can provide a Merleau-Pontian response to the Second Analogy, but my view is basically as follows:[13] First, the whole problem Kant means to solve with the Second Analogy presupposes that distinct moments of a temporal process bear an external relation to each other. Kant asks something like: How can I arrange the distinct moments A, B, and C in an objective order? He resolves this question by appeal to rules that prescribe a necessary arrangement of this manifold, and so an objective one. But we have already seen several examples that belie this view as a characterization of the *perception* of temporal processes. Instead, temporal processes are primarily given as wholes, such that each moment bears an internal relation with the others. That is, the *meaning* or *sense* of each moment is motivated by the meaning of each other moment, and so depends on those meanings. For example, each note of a melody has the meaning it does for us in virtue of the melody to which it belongs. We are not given a note that we must then put together with the others to form a melody; rather, the note is already meaningful in terms of its place within the melody. Thus, the smallest unit of a temporal process is not an independent moment, B, but B with a temporal horizon (which we might denote a-B-c). This fact alone accounts for the sense I have that it would be wrong to arrange the moments C-B-A rather than A-B-C. If I arranged them in the former order, I would violate the sense of the notes. Consider the simple phenomenon that when one hears a melody played backward, it does not sound like the melody played backward (the way I immediately recognize 9-8-7 is 7-8-9 backward)—rather, the melody played

backward has a totally other sense, one unrelated to the original melody. If the notes really were given as external to one another, there would be no reason for this dissolution of sense. Instead, the very sense of the notes, grounded in their internal relation to one another, suffices to require a particular succession and to render others inappropriate. That is to say, the sense of each note spontaneously norms my arrangement: I spontaneously recognize that certain arrangements would be erroneous.[14] In other words, my perception of time order is motivated.

Kant, evaluating this perception under the standard of justification, would perhaps object that such perceptual arrangements count for no more than dreams. But this just isn't so. My perception of time order is spontaneously responsive to normative forces, and so in no sense a mere dream. There is no reason why a further standard would be required to call this perception of time order objective. Now, it may turn out that to make *justified* empirical judgments about time order it is necessary to abstract each moment from its temporal horizon and synthesize the moments in an order necessitated by a rule. But this is a separate issue, one that does not concern perception. In this sense, the problem that Kant solves with the synthetic principles arises only at the level of justified empirical judgment.

I'll take as a second example Kant's axioms of intuition. This principle holds, "All intuitions are extensive magnitudes" (*CPR*, B 202). Kant's argument for the axioms runs as follows: every intuition has the form of space and time, and any intuition in space and time contains a homogeneous manifold, so no intuition can be apprehended except through the synthesis of a homogeneous manifold. In other words, no appearance can be apprehended except as the synthesis of a homogeneous manifold of intuition. But, according to Kant, the consciousness of such a synthesis is the concept of magnitude, and so no appearance can be apprehended unless it is thought through the concept of magnitude. This magnitude is *extensive*, because it is one in which the parts make possible, and so precede, the whole: any intuition is an aggregate of spatial or temporal parts.

Kant's conclusion is undeniable: there is no pointilistic intuition; every intuition has some spatial or temporal extension. But while quantity is an appropriate category by which to approach empirical judgment, it is not the appropriate category by which to approach perception.

I think one could respond in a Merleau-Pontian vein to Kant's argument here as follows: Perception in fact *cannot* make use of the concept of extensive magnitude in order to synthesize an intuition. Any extensive magnitude

is an aggregate of units. But there are no units in experience prior to the synthesis of an intuition. It is not the case that perception begins with a collection of parts and must assemble these into a coherent whole, as if perception were a jigsaw puzzle. If perception did begin with distinct parts, then we would run into the problem that these parts are themselves extensive magnitudes, and so would have to be assembled out of prior parts. This assumption obviously results in a regress, where any immediately given part is mediated by itself being the aggregate of prior parts. Consequently, it must instead be the case that a whole is given first. This whole can afterward be analyzed into parts, and these parts can then be treated as wholes, as units, out of which the original whole can be composed. But this analysis necessarily comes after the fact: there must first be a one, a whole, which can be analyzed into parts or itself treated as a part and assembled into a larger whole. Thus, unity does not depend on extensive magnitude: instead, it makes extensive magnitude possible.

Let us think this argument through phenomenologically. What is the incipient moment of perception like? Merleau-Ponty analogizes this incipient moment to a nebula. "If I am waiting for someone at the door of a house on a poorly lit street, each person who comes through the door appears momentarily under a confused form. *Someone* is leaving the house, and I do not yet know if I can recognize this person as the one I am waiting for. The well-known silhouette will be born from this fog like the earth from its nebula" (*PhP*, 338). Of course, this example is not exactly primordial enough: it describes the move from recognizing "someone" to recognizing a particular individual. Nevertheless, it gets to the precise issue I am pursuing, namely, the advent of determinacy. Prior to the whole, perception does not give us discrete units, but a nebula within which a form can coalesce. The proof of this is that I do not in this case perceive precise features of the other's face and then draw a conclusion about who it is. For the parts themselves are not yet determinate. Rather, as the other comes into view, this nebula begins to acquire determinacy until suddenly I recognize the one who is leaving. Once this person has been identified, the parts are transformed; they acquire a determinate character: I know the eyes, the hair, et cetera. Only in very unusual cases (e.g., in perceptual disorders) do we work from the parts to the whole.

Chuck Close, who has prosopagnosia ("face blindness"), is famous for his style of decomposing faces into parts and then assembling these parts into a single image. Consider his description of why and how he paints portraits:

> It's not so strange that I . . . made portraits. I was driven to make portraits. I was trying to understand the faces and commit them to memory, of people that I know and love. And for me it has to be flattened out. Once it's flattened out, I can commit it to memory in a way that I can't if I'm looking at you. If you move your head half an inch it's a whole new head I haven't seen before. But once it's flat . . . I have no trouble seeing that was a face because I can see flat patterns of face. . . . I'm overwhelmed by the whole. I can't make a decision. I've broken [the image] down into small bite size incremental units. And the degree to which I can move from incremental unit to another and build clusters that stack up to make something is because I am profoundly interested in artificiality.[15]

Close cannot see the face as it presents itself to a subject without prosopagnosia (i.e., as a whole in its mobility and depth). Instead, he must first flatten the image and attend to abstract features of the face ("patterns"). He does not look to the face as a whole, because to do so would be *blinding*, that is, he could not find any meaning there: the whole is "overwhelming." Instead, he attempts to see the face through its parts. But this manner of attending to faces is different from how those without prosopagnosia see faces, and indeed from how Close perceives things other than faces. For the result of this style is precisely the "artificiality" in which Close is interested. Especially in Close's later work, while from a distance the portrait presents a coherent figure, the closer one gets the more it decomposes into distinct pockets of materiality. Precisely because the whole is in this manner *built* out of the parts—rather than being generated in the organic interaction of whole and part—it acquires the air of artificiality. Here, even the reflection in the eye, seen from up close, is on the verge of dissolving into mere color.

Extensive magnitude is, then, not a condition for the possibility of the experience of a unity, because the whole must precede its parts and is what makes its parts be parts (determinate unities) in the first place. What is true is that extensive magnitude must be able to accompany all our experiences of unity, because every perception arises out of the nebulous generativity of sense, and in this way there is no *simple* (rather than complex) perception. For this reason, every form can always be decomposed into parts from which it can be recomposed. But, in this case, we must say that extensive magnitude is licensed by perception and not its condition. On the other hand, none of this means that extensive magnitude is not a condition for empirical judgment about intuitively given

manifolds. And, quite possibly, empirical judgment does require us to attend to the parts as fully constituted (i.e., discrete and limited), parts out of which the whole can be aggregated, in the manner Kant describes.

These two examples allow us to see how implausible it is to claim that the categories and synthetic principles are conditions for the possibility of perception. Any argument for such a claim makes presuppositions that are belied by a careful phenomenology of perception. Indeed, the whole problem Kant seeks to resolve with the categories seems to arise only at the reflective level, and so there is no need to import the terms of the understanding to resolve these problems for perception. This is, essentially, because perception is not merely subjective for being ungoverned by the categories: its objectivity derives from motivation, perception's spontaneous sensitivity to norms.[16]

Again, all this does not so much show that Kant's account is false, as that it cannot describe conditions for the possibility of perception. This, by itself, does not give us a reason to deny that there is another level of experience that might well be described in terms of empirical judgment, and so might well be conditioned by the categories and synthetic principles. Indeed, it may even be that perception is, in a certain sense, defined by the possibility of such an experience. Plausibly, it is definitive of human perception that it has the intellect, and the whole critical infrastructure that involves, on its horizon. As we saw, for example, perception necessarily admits of being reflectively analyzed in terms of extensive magnitude, since perception develops out of the complex generativity of sense. But what this means is not that the intellect is a condition for perception, but that it must be able to *accompany* perception. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "We must say not that [the condition of possibility of experience] precedes experience (even in the transcendental sense) but that it must be able to accompany it, that is, that it translates or expresses its essential character but does not indicate a prior possibility whence it would have issued" (*VI*, 45).

REFLECTIVE METHOD

Second, I will argue that Kant depends on the motivating power of perception in a manner that he does not realize, and that this fact challenges the a priori status of the categories and the synthetic principles. The considerations that lead me to this conclusion have to do with an understanding of

Kant's method (i.e., with the general form of transcendental argumentation). I argue that this form requires that any a priori knowledge justified by transcendental argumentation be ultimately grounded in the motivating power of perception.

To make this argument, I first need to clarify my understanding of the general form of Kant's transcendental argumentation. Karl Ameriks has drawn a well-known distinction between two ways of interpreting Kant's transcendental argumentation, as either progressive or regressive.[17] Both interpretations agree that what defines a transcendental argument is the conditional connection between a purported body of knowledge and a transcendental condition for this body of knowledge. But on a progressive interpretation (proposed by, e.g., Strawson), Kant's purpose in drawing this conditional connection is to refute skeptical objections to the purported body of knowledge (i.e., to secure the purported body of knowledge). In contrast, on a regressive interpretation (defended by Ameriks), Kant assumes the body of knowledge as given, and on these grounds concludes that the transcendental condition for this knowledge is objectively valid. In the context of the Second Analogy, for example, the progressive interpretation holds that Kant is attempting to secure our knowledge of objective time order from skeptical worries. In contrast, the regressive interpretation holds that Kant assumes we do have knowledge of objective time order and is demonstrating the validity of causality as a condition for the possibility of that knowledge.[18]

I adopt a regressive interpretation. This is because I think no other interpretation allows Kant's goals adequately to come into view. In brief, as I see it, the purpose of Kant's transcendental arguments is to establish the objective validity of certain transcendental conditions, and to do so he must presuppose the experience the conditions of which he is deducing. If instead he were attempting to secure our experience from the skeptic, his argument would not demonstrate the objective validity of transcendental conditions but presuppose it.

First, Kant evidently does take establishing the objective validity of transcendental conditions as the goal of his transcendental arguments. The goal of the Transcendental Deduction is to demonstrate "in what way concepts can refer to objects a priori" (*CPR*, B 117). Kant's purpose in the synthetic principles is to provide a priori principles with "a proof that starts from the subjective sources underlying the possibility of cognizing an object as such" (*CPR*, B 188).

So, on my interpretation, Kant deduces the objective validity of certain features of the objects of experience as conditions for the possibility of the experience of those objects. This argument has, basically, the following structure:

a. If experience takes the form *X*, then the objects of experience must take the form *Y*.
b. Experience takes the form *X*.
c. Therefore, the objects of experience take the form *Y*.

Here *X* names a generally agreed-to feature of our experience, and *Y* names some feature of the form of experience in question. If this argument goes through, then it justifies us in judging that the objects of experience have the form *Y*. And it does this without invoking actual experiences. Therefore, it establishes knowledge of certain synthetic propositions (propositions that predicate certain features of the objects of experience) a priori. The synthetic principles are just a catalog of such synthetic a priori knowledge.

In the above argument, the minor premise describes our experience, while the major premise is the transcendental move (i.e., the turn from experience to the conditions for its possibility). For example, on my interpretation, Kant's argument in the Second Analogy boils down to the claims that we do experience an objective time order, and that only if the objects of experience are governed by causal necessity is it possible that we experience an objective time order. To reach the conclusion that the objects of experience are governed by causal necessity, then, Kant must hold that we do in fact experience an objective time order. So, the transcendental condition is justified in the conclusion only insofar as the minor premise holds. But the minor premise cannot be justified in this same fashion, precisely because it is the condition upon which the conclusion is justified. Instead, it must be presupposed. This gives us strong reason to accept the regressive interpretation.

Of course, on a progressive interpretation, it might be that all Kant presupposes is the unity of apperception, which is justified analytically. The analytic unity of apperception requires an a priori synthesis of all presentations, that is, the synthetic unity of apperception. This, in turn, requires laws of synthesis. So, these laws are justified analytically and not on the basis of any presuppositions about the character of experience. I find this interpretation unconvincing for at least two reasons.[19] First, I see no way of getting from the synthetic unity of apperception to the laws of experience without knowing something about the character of experience. More generally, it remains

unclear on a progressive interpretation why just these categories, and not others, would be deduced as conditions for unifying experience. The clue that guides Kant to just these categories is that they, as functions of synthesis of intuitions, are the same functions that synthesize presentations in judgments (*CPR*, B 104–5). But this presupposes a general knowledge of the sorts of judgments we make, which itself can't be derived merely from the synthetic unity of apperception.[20] And, of course, that just such conditions should be required becomes even more unclear when we move from the merely intellectual synthesis of experience to its figurative synthesis. For example, even if the synthetic unity of apperception by itself entailed the categories of relation, this would not entail that experience takes the form of *succession* according to rules—it does so only if additionally one presupposes that experience has objective *time* order (i.e., only if I know that experience has time order, do I know that to unify my experiences I need succession according to rules).[21] So, it seems we need a general knowledge of the form of experience in order to identify the conditions of that experience.

Second, even though there is significant evidence for this progressive interpretation of the Transcendental Deduction (it is quite possible, for example, to read §§16–20 of the B-Deduction in these terms), I don't find textual evidence for such a progressive interpretation of the proof of the synthetic principles—which, as the judgments that the understanding brings about a priori (*CPR*, B 187), are our a priori cognitions in the proper sense. Kant's explicit argument in the Principles is that these judgments are licensed by the fact that they are conditions for the possibility of experience (*CPR*, B 195), rather than immediately as requirements for the unity of the I. As we saw, the basic argument of the Second Analogy, for example, is that if experience is to contain an objective time order, which it does, then it must be subject to causality.

If the regressive interpretation is correct, then Kant's account faces a problem. For if the minor premise is presupposed, it cannot be justified a priori. Synthetic a priori judgments are justified as conditions for the possibility of experience. But the synthetic judgments that figure in the minor premise of a transcendental argument (such as "Experience takes the form X," for example, "Experience is disclosive of an objective time order") are not conditions for the possibility of experience: they are descriptions of experience.[22] Therefore, they do not count as synthetic a priori knowledge. And if these do not count as synthetic a priori knowledge, then the conclusions derived from these will not be justified purely a priori, but only a priori *given* certain features of experience. What can be known a priori by transcendental

argument is, then, only that the categories and the synthetic principles are objectively valid; as conditions for the possibility of experience, any object given in experience would have to have the look prescribed to it by the categories. But this does not settle whether any objects *can in fact* be given to a being whose experience is governed by the categories—this matter can be settled only by experience itself. To move from objective validity to cognition of objects, then, one must supply an additional premise that can be provided only by experience.

Perhaps, one will respond, Kant is ultimately interested only in demonstrating the objective validity of synthetic a priori judgments. Then there would be no conflict with Merleau-Ponty's thesis that all a priori justification is founded on experience. But I don't see how this option is viable, for if it were true, then Kant would have to abandon the aim of determining what exactly it is that can be *known* a priori.[23] As I have just suggested, such an argument shows only that if there were objects, then they would have to have such and such a form. But this does not say anything about the form that objects do actually have, since it may well be that an intellect such as ours can have no genuine objects. On the basis of such an argument alone, it is entirely permissible that experience really is as confused as a dream, that cinnabar now would be red, now black. So, the argument would not really establish *a priori knowledge*. Such judgments as are made in the synthetic principles would be, in Husserl's terms, merely contemplative and not assertive.[24]

Might we think that the features of experience are known a priori but *not* in a manner that is justified by a transcendental argument? It seems to me that this would cut against the core principles of the first critique, for it would amount to a sort of dogmatism, that is, "the pretension that we can make progress by means of no more than a pure cognition from concepts . . . without inquiring into the manner and the right by which reason has arrived at them" (*CPR*, B xxxv). In other words, such a response would not be fully critical.

To be clear, I am *not* making a skeptical objection. I assume we *do* know the features of experience that Kant presupposes in his transcendental arguments. My point is only that these features are not *justified* by Kant's own principles, and that if this is so, then the whole transcendental infrastructure will ultimately rely on something other than justification. The wrong conclusion would be to think that therefore Kant's conclusions are to be explained merely by facts about our subjectivity (i.e., the skeptical conclusion). Instead, the features of experience that Kant presupposes are *motivated*. They are

known a priori, but in the sense of a priori knowledge that I described in chapter 4 (i.e., not known independently of experience, but founded on experience because motivated in the course of experience).

If this is so, then reflective thinking relies on the experience that it explains. The priority at the transcendental level of the condition to the conditioned is reversed phenomenologically and epistemologically: here the conditioned, experience, is itself the condition, the epistemic starting point. This does not contradict Kant's project, and in general (as I described at the end of chapter 2), my analysis does not deny that there is a space of reasons governed by the standard of justification. My analysis only reframes Kant's project (and the space of reasons generally) by placing it within a genetic context that occurs beneath the level of description with which Kant is primarily concerned. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "The whole reflective analysis is not false, but still naïve, as long as it dissimulates from itself its own mainspring" (*VI*, 34).[25] In contrast, it is into this main-spring—into its own ground—of reflective method that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology inquires, and it is here that an account of motivation is required.

CHAPTER 7

METAPHYSICAL JUDGMENTS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

I have argued that Kant's account of a priori knowledge in the first critique is circumscribed by Merleau-Ponty's. If this is true, though, we are now faced with a formidable question. For the task of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to put metaphysics within secure bounds. If Merleau-Ponty is providing a corrective to the first critique, then we must ask whether Merleau-Ponty releases metaphysics from these bounds. In other words, does the motivational account of a priori knowledge return us to a precritical stance on metaphysics, one that would allow pure reason free rein? Such a result would, I take it, contravene the deep instincts of phenomenology—and continental philosophy since Kant in general—and so we cannot afford to gloss over this possibility. Indeed, more so than perceptual or a priori knowledge in general, metaphysical knowledge has perhaps been historically the most urgent subject of epistemology, and it was this subject with which Kant was most concerned in the first critique. We need to see, then, where my Merleau-Pontian account leaves us with respect to the peculiar kind of a priori knowledge with which metaphysics is concerned.

However, as will quickly become clear, while this question is indeed epistemological—since it inquires into the limits, possibilities, and sources of knowledge—it is also more than an epistemological question. Answering this question completely takes us beyond epistemology and into ontology itself—in other words, it takes us beyond the scope of the present work. This final chapter, in which I take up the question of metaphysical knowledge, marks the end of this epistemological project.

Let me begin by defining my question here more precisely. By "metaphysics," Kant means cognition wholly independent of experience: "*Metaphysics* is a speculative cognition by reason that is wholly isolated and rises entirely above being instructed by experience. It is cognition through mere

concepts . . . so that here reason is to be its own pupil."[1] As we have just seen, Kant develops a new kind of a priori justification: transcendental justification, that is, justification of propositions that describe conditions for the possibility of experience. Metaphysics, by contrast, aims to provide a priori justification through mere reason, and whereas the concepts produced by the *understanding* are constitutive of the objects of experience, the concepts produced by *reason* are not. Because metaphysics aims at cognition through mere reason, the sorts of judgments made by metaphysics cannot be described as conditions for the possibility of experience. Consequently, according to Kant, such judgments cannot be adequately justified, and so are purely speculative. In the "Transcendental Dialectic," Kant explores the dialectical (that is, sophistical or illusory) conclusions reached by reason independently of experience, demonstrating that these conclusions rest on a common error, namely, that "the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts for the benefit of understanding is regarded as an objective necessity of the determination of things in themselves" (*CPR*, B 353).

In chapter 6, I argued that Kant's critical project is in certain respects compatible with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological one, insofar as these two conduct their investigations on different levels: the first on the level of empirical judgment with the standard of justification, and the second on the level of perception with the standard of motivation. In the present chapter, I will consider the consequences of this line of thinking for Kant's critique of metaphysics. It seems to me that, while Kant is right that the conclusions reached by dialectical reason are not *justified* by experience, these conclusions may yet be *motivated* by it. Motivation, in other words, might seem to allow for something like metaphysical thinking. To be sure, this kind of metaphysical thinking—grounded on the motivating power of experience—is not immune to skepticism. The skeptic approaches our beliefs with the standard of justification, and as we have seen, motivation does not meet this standard. And yet, as I have argued, motivation is the source of our epistemically fundamental beliefs: all reasoning terminates in motivated belief; all justification is at some point grounded on motivation. The skeptic merely turns the consequent against the ground. In my view, this is a legitimate philosophical project. But it is not the only kind of philosophical project, and it would be a mistake to think that beliefs that are not justified are therefore unconstrained by experience; I have argued that motivated beliefs are unjustified and yet normed by experience. This kind of metaphysical thinking, then, cannot simply be termed "illusory." In other words, there is a kind of project

that, through describing experience, attempts to clarify the motivational lines running between experience and metaphysical belief, and in this manner to make clear and distinct the motives furnished by perception.

Here, too, on this description, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Kant's critical philosophy do not exactly conflict. Instead, they approach knowledge with different standards. But neither is the latter simply independent of the former. I will argue that, with regard to metaphysics, as with regard to our synthetic a priori knowledge, critical philosophy tacitly relies on the experience that phenomenology describes.

Bearing this Merleau-Pontian rejoinder to Kant's critique of metaphysics out to completion would require a further book. What I want to do here is only to establish the general contours of this position. More exactly, my purpose is to demonstrate how such a project would look by applying it to a particular metaphysical question: that explored by Kant in the Third Paralogism, namely, the identity of the self. My approach will follow the same general plan as that of the last chapter. First, I will argue that, pace Kant, the transcendental unity of apperception is *not* a condition for the possibility of the perception of things, nor of making normed judgments about self-identity—Merleau-Ponty describes a tacit cohesion of experience that suffices to motivate both. Nevertheless, Kant may well be right that this tacit cohesion does not *justify* judgments about objects or about self-identity, and if we seek justification, we may well require the transcendental unity of apperception. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to self-identity is, in my view, not exactly incompatible with Kant's critical approach, given that the two evaluate this belief with different standards. But, second, I will argue that Kant's approach tacitly draws on and requires the phenomenological description of self-perception. Without this description, I will argue, we cannot make sense of how transcendental and empirical apperception intend the same subject.

THE PARALOGISMS

But, first, let me explain Kant's account of apperception, beginning with the Paralogisms. There, Kant's general claim is that rational psychology—the study of the self through reason alone—makes each of its major inferences on the basis of a common error, namely, by conflating different manners in which we speak of a subject. According to Kant, the Paralogisms take the form exemplified in the following syllogism:

> *What cannot be thought otherwise than as subject also does not exist otherwise than as subject, and therefore is substance.*
>
> *Now a thinking being, considered merely as such, cannot be thought otherwise than as subject.*
>
> *Therefore it also exists only as a subject, i.e., as substance.* (*CPR*, B 410–11)

Kant writes of this syllogism, "In the major premise one talks about a being that can be thought in general, in every respect, and hence also as it may be given in intuition. But in the minor premise one talks about it insofar as it considers itself, as subject, only relatively to thought and the unity of consciousness, but not simultaneously in reference to the intuition whereby it is given as object for such thought" (*CPR*, B 411). That is, the major premise refers an object of thought—something given in intuition—whereas the minor premise refers to the thinking itself, which is *not* given in any intuition, but is merely how thought has to consider itself. So, the two premises refer to the subject in different ways—one as object, one as subject—resulting in a fallacy of equivocation. According to Kant, the issue is that the subject as referred to in the minor premise yields no cognition, because we have no corresponding intuition (*CPR*, B 412). We cannot have intuition of the subject, in this sense, since any intuition of myself necessarily occurs under the condition of time, the form of inner sense, and inner sense cannot give the self *as* subject, only as object. In the "Transcendental Aesthetic," Kant writes, "Whatever is presented through a sense is, to that extent, always appearance. Hence either we must not grant that there is an inner sense at all, or we must grant that the subject who is the object of this sense can be presented through it only as appearance, and not as he would judge himself if his intuition were self-activity only" (*CPR*, B 68). So, the major premise refers to the subject as given (as an object), whereas the minor premise refers to the self, a thinking being, insofar as it is transcendentally constrained to think itself (as subject). But there is a mismatch between the two, since our intuition does not *give* the self as we must think it, as it would if our intuition were "self-activity only." For this reason, no conclusion can be drawn from these two premises.

So, Kant's articulation of the Paralogisms depends on his distinction between transcendental apperception (how I am constrained to think of the self

as subject) and empirical apperception (how the self is given in our sensible intuition). Let me be more clear about the difference between these two, then.

Empirical apperception names our experience of ourselves, the self we are given or of which we have intuition. The sort of intuition we have of ourselves is basically an awareness of the flux of consciousness (i.e., that I am thinking now *X*, now *Y*, now *Z*, etc.). These thoughts are an intuition of *self* because they are determinations of my mind, that is, each thought is predicated of me: "*I* am thinking *X*." Thus, Kant equates empirical apperception with "inner perception," that is, "consciousness of oneself in terms of the determinations of one's state" (*CPR*, A 107). Such determinations include all manner of presentations, both subjective (such as feelings or sensations) and objective (such as experiences and cognitions).[2] I can attend to all such presentations as determinations of my state in virtue of my ability to perceive my own state. If, for example, I perceive a storm brewing, I can attend not only to the storm, but to the thrill it causes just under my skin, to my perception of clouds, to my anticipation of rain, et cetera as determinations of my consciousness: that at such a moment I am having such presentations and not others.

According to Kant, such empirical apperception is incapable of delivering anything constant. Our inner perception delivers instead a constant flux of determinations: a stream of presentations in which nothing holds. But this means that empirical apperception is incapable of demonstrating the subject's identity. For, following Hume, if this flux of presentations were to justify us in thinking that the subject is identical throughout, then it would have to contain some constant presentation. Just as I cognize the identity of an external object by noting the identity of some presentation in it throughout a given time, so to cognize the identity of the self I would have to be given some identical presentation throughout the entire time span that I attribute to myself. But no such presentation is to be found. Consequently, Kant writes that empirical apperception "can give us no constant or enduring self in this flow of inner appearances" (*CPR*, A 107); and again that it is "intrinsically sporadic and without any reference to the subject's identity" (*CPR*, B 133).

In contrast, transcendental apperception presents the I not as it is given, but as we are transcendentally constrained to think it. In my view, Kant thinks we are transcendentally constrained to think of the I as a unity for two distinct reasons. The first reason is that transcendental apperception is a condition for the possibility of experience (see, e.g., *CPR*, A 106–7; or §15 of the B-Deduction). As we saw in chapter 6, we can be justified in thinking

that there is something like an *object* of experience in general only if our presentations are bound by a necessary synthesis. And since we do experience objects, the manifold presentations given by the intuition must be bound by a necessary synthesis. Our concepts, and at the highest level the categories, provide particular rules for synthesis. But these rules can be justifiably applied to the manifold only if we have some ground for thinking that *all* our presentations belong together. The transcendental unity of apperception—the thought of the necessary unity of all my presentations—is this ground. As a condition for the experience of objects (necessary unities), since we do in fact have this experience, there must be a necessary unity of apperception.[3]

Kant also adduces a second, distinct sort of justification for the transcendental unity of apperception. While in the first place this unity is justified as a condition for the possibility of experience, in the second it is justified analytically, by analyzing the very concept of "*my* presentation."[4] In §16 of the B-Deduction, Kant argues that the "I think" must be capable of accompanying all *my* presentations (on threat of contradiction), and since my presentations are manifold, everything manifold in a presentation must have reference to the same subject (the same "I think"). The unity of apperception is thus derived analytically.

Transcendental apperception, while constraining our thinking, does not *give* an I; it offers no intuition of the self. Kant writes of transcendental apperception that "this *presentation* is a *thought*, not an *intuition*" (*CPR*, B 157). As we saw above, it is this lack of intuitive fulfillment that makes the Paralogisms possible. Transcendentally, the I must be thought as substance (insofar as the "I" does not attach to thought as a predicate), as simple (a complex thought cannot be distributed through multiple subjects, and hence the subject of a complex thought must be simple), as identical through time (because variation occurs in time, and time is the form of inner sense, and hence is referred to the identical subject), and as distinct from things outside it. But in the Paralogisms this necessary form for thinking the subject—what Kant calls the "logical" subject—is confused with a "real" subject, that is, a subject that is or could be really given in intuition (*CPR*, A 350). The rational psychologist mistakenly takes this necessary presentation of the self for a genuine cognition of an object.

Let me briefly clarify the place of self-identity in all this. According to Kant, empirical apperception is insufficient to ground cognition of the I's identity. As we saw, he claims that empirical consciousness is "intrinsically sporadic" or dispersed [*zerstreuet*] and "without reference to the subject's

identity" (*CPR*, B 133), and that inner perception "can give us no constant or enduring self" in the flow of inner appearance (*CPR*, A 107), that is, in the shifting determinations of our state. Since Kant's meaning behind these claims is not necessarily obvious, let me be clear about how I interpret them.

Kant equates empirical apperception with inner perception, that is, "consciousness of oneself in terms of the determinations of one's state" (*CPR*, A 107). But the determinations of one's state are mutable. As Kant puts it in the Third Paralogism, "We do not encounter in the soul any permanent appearance" (*CPR*, A 364). Kant, I take it, is referring to the arguments made by Hume in his "Treatise on Human Nature."[5] There, Hume argues that no impression gives rise to the idea of personal identity, and so personal identity is a fictitious idea. According to Hume, if any impression were to give rise to the idea of self, it would have to "continue invariably the same through the whole course of our lives," but we have no such "constant and invariable" impression.[6] What we are in reality, according to Hume, is a bundle of distinct perceptions. Hume's argument runs as follows: The idea of identity is established in one of three ways: (1) our perceptions are not actually distinct and can be "run into one"; (2) we observe some real connection between our distinct perceptions; or (3) we associate these perceptions in the imagination and falsely attribute identity to them.[7] Hume argues that the first option won't work, because each perception is a distinct existence, separable from each other perception. Further, the second option won't work because we never observe real connections among objects. Therefore, we associate perceptions on the basis of the relations of resemblance and causality, which leads us falsely to attribute identity to these perceptions. Kant, of course, argues that there is instead a transcendental basis for the unity of our perceptions, but agrees with Hume that empirical inner perception is insufficient to ground this identity, since empirical inner perception contains no constant or enduring perception.

While I am not, then, empirically licensed to think of the self as identical, Kant holds that I am transcendentally required to do so. This is because, at the transcendental level, time is *in* the "I," as the form of the I's inner sense, and so for whatever time I am conscious, this time belongs within the identical self. But for another subject, Kant considers, I am something within time, far from time being within me (*CPR*, A 362). In other words, at the empirical level, I am something within time, that is, I intuit myself (through inner sense) and others intuit me (through outer sense) under the form of time, and since there is no permanent element in this intuition, no permanent

self is given. While I am transcendentally constrained to think of the self as identical, then, this does not give me any cognition of myself as an identical subject, because no intuition can be given for this thought. Consequently, the rational psychologist's inference to personal identity is paralogistic (i.e., it conflates the transcendental with a cognition of the I in itself).

THE TACIT COGITO

Much as with their epistemological views generally, it might be tempting to think that Merleau-Ponty and Kant offer conflicting accounts of apperception. And, certainly, Merleau-Ponty indicates as much (*PhP*, 449). But, again, I think it would be more accurate to say the two projects are working at different levels of analysis. Kant's account of the transcendental unity of apperception might well be a condition for the possibility of *empirical judgment*, and yet not a condition for the possibility of *perception*. As we saw in chapter 6, if experience is approached with the standard of justification, then plausibly something like an object of experience is possible only if some rule prescribes a *necessary* synthesis to one's presentations: for any empirical judgment to have objective purport, it must aim at some necessary synthesis. Further, as Kant puts it in the A-Deduction, "Any necessity is always based on a transcendental condition" (*CPR*, A 106), and the ultimate transcendental condition for any necessary synthesis of a manifold is that that manifold be necessarily united in a single consciousness (i.e., the transcendental unity of apperception). If we approach experience with the standard of justification, the standard appropriate to empirical judgment, then the necessary unity of apperception is plausibly a transcendental condition for experience.

But justification is not the standard appropriate to perception, or so I have argued. Instead, motivation provides the kind of normativity characteristic of perception. A critical consequence of this thought is that perception has objective purport without being governed by the necessity of laws (though Merleau-Ponty thinks the necessity of laws must be able to accompany perception). With respect to apperception, this means that a *necessary* synthesis of the manifold will not be a transcendental condition for perception, and so neither will a necessary unity of consciousness. Instead, because the perceptual synthesis of an object must be only actual and motivated, it has as its condition only that consciousness have an actual and motivated unity. What I need to establish in this section, then, is just that there is this unity, and that it

is not merely arbitrary but motivated. Merleau-Ponty describes exactly such a unity of consciousness with his account of the cohesion of a pre-personal life, or what he also calls the tacit cogito.[8]

What Merleau-Ponty wishes to establish, in speaking of a tacit cogito, is that I would not be able to *express* the cogito *meaningfully* (and with *evidence*) if it were not instantiated in my experience prior to expression in explicit self-consciousness—what Merleau-Ponty calls the "spoken cogito." This contrast between a tacit and a spoken cogito is not so much concerned with the capacity to *verbalize* self-consciousness as with the capacity to think it articulately; according to Merleau-Ponty, one cannot think a meaning that one cannot express, and so the capacity to express or articulate the cogito is the capacity explicitly to think the cogito.[9] Thus the distinction between the spoken and the tacit cogito is a distinction between an explicit and an implicit self-consciousness. Put this way, Merleau-Ponty's claim is that we can explicitly reflect on ourselves (in any meaningful way) only because we have a kind of implicit self-awareness prior to reflection. This is revealed, for example, in the way that we are always concerned with ourselves (something like what Heidegger calls "care"), even without constantly explicitly reflecting upon ourselves. Merleau-Ponty writes, "Beyond the spoken *cogito,* the one that is converted into utterances and into essential truth, there is clearly a tacit *cogito*, an experience of myself by myself. . . . The tacit *Cogito*, presence of self to self, being existence itself, is prior to every philosophy, but it only knows itself in limit situations in which it is threatened, such as in the fear of death or in the anxiety caused by another person's gaze upon me" (*PhP*, 426). Such limit situations reveal that I have a sort of presence to myself, in virtue of which I am always ready explicitly to recognize that a situation concerns me.

But that this implicit or tacit cogito can be raised to explicit consciousness does not entail that tacit and spoken cogito have the same structure, since, as I argued in chapter 1, attention can have a transformative effect. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's view is that reflection introduces structural transformations in the self. For our purposes, the essential difference has to do with the unity of the self over time. Whereas explicit apperception concerns the *identity* of the self, the implicit apperception of the *tacit cogito* is better characterized in terms of *cohesion*. Merleau-Ponty characterizes the kind of unity that subjectivity possesses as follows: I am "not a series of psychical acts, nor for that matter a central I who gathers them together in a synthetic unity, but rather a single experience that is inseparable from itself, a single 'cohesion of life,'

a single temporality that unfolds itself [*s'explicite*] from its birth and confirms this birth in each present" (*PhP*, 430). The self is *neither* a "bundle" or "heap" of distinct sensations or acts *nor* a subject separable from these acts, but their *cohesion*.

To see what this means, compare Merleau-Ponty's position with Hume's claim that the sensations we entertain are distinct and separable. For Merleau-Ponty, the kind of unity we possess means that our distinct experiences are in an important sense *not* separable. He writes, for example, that "my first perception, along with the horizons that surrounded it, is an ever-present event, an unforgettable tradition; even as a thinking subject I am still this first perception, I am the continuation of the same life that it inaugurated. In a sense, there are no more distinct acts of consciousness or of *Erlebnisse* in a life than there are isolated things in the world" (*PhP*, 429–30). Not that there is *no* difference between our experiences—the content of inner perception does not all simply run together into a single sensation—but that, though distinct, our experiences are inseparable.[10] One's feeling of grief, for example, is different from one's consciousness of a loss, and yet not separable from it. Of course, it is possible to be conscious of a loss without grieving, and so the existence of the one does not exactly require the existence of the other. Yet the *meaning* that this loss has for me and the meaning of my grief are two moments of a whole. The grief and the consciousness of the loss bear an *internal relation* to one another in the sense defined in chapter 1: the meaning of each depends on the meaning of the other. Put otherwise, the two belong to a common field, where "field" is understood (roughly) to mean a generality, each member of which is internally related to that generality. Lighting, in this sense, is a field, because the color of each member of the field is perceived in virtue of the color of the lighting. Similarly, melody is a field, since each note in a melody acquires its meanings from, and contributes to, the sense of the whole melody. When Merleau-Ponty writes that there are no distinct *Erlebnisse*, he means that experience is a field in this sense: "I am a field. I am an experience" (*PhP*, 429). In other words, every experience is internally related to the whole of experience.

Note that fields are not an accomplishment of active consciousness. I can advert to a field, as when I shift attention from the colored object to the lighting, from the particular notes to the melody. But I need not do so in order for the field to determine its members. For example, I need not advert to previous experiences of hearing a particular sonata in order for those experiences to bear on my experience of the rendition I am now hearing (e.g., I hear it more

deeply or in more detail, given my previous experiences). Indeed, these previous experiences may be forgotten beyond the possibility of recall to explicit consciousness and yet continue to bear on contemporary perceptions. The normal function of the field is to be the *background* against which a particular figure acquires its meaning. Further, the relation between particulars and a field is spontaneous: *I* do not normally synthesize the note with the melody—the former is simply given in terms of the latter.[11]

In sum, while it is true that there is no constant impression within the flow of experience, this does not mean that experience constitutes a "bundle" or "heap" of distinct experiences. Our experiences bear an internal relation to each other in virtue of the field of sense or experience that defines the tacit cogito. This unity might be entirely inapparent at the level of explicit apperception, as occurs when an experience I have forgotten beyond the point of possible recall bears on a present experience. Thus, even when I am unable explicitly to identify each of my distinct experiences, existence is yet unified by the cohesion of a field.

Notice that this tacit cogito does not quite fit either empirical or transcendental apperception. It is not empirical apperception, in Kant's sense, because it is not itself an element within the stream of consciousness (inner sense). Hume and Kant claim that empirical apperception would have to be such an element within the stream if it were to provide any impression of an identical self, and both argue (by Merleau-Ponty's lights, correctly) that there is no such impression. Instead, the tacit cogito is the field within which these elements acquire their sense. Like transcendental apperception, the tacit cogito has to do with the form taken by the varying elements within the stream of consciousness, namely, the cohesion of this stream; it is not an impression within the stream, but the fact that our different "impressions" are never fully distinct. But neither is the tacit cogito a transcendental apperception in Kant's sense, since it names only an *actual*, and not a necessary, unity: the tacit cogito does not name some necessary rule governing the synthesis of my distinct experiences; it simply names the fact that my experiences do in fact bear an internal relation to one another.

Now, my purpose in this section has only been to establish that there is such an actual unity of the self. This is the only condition that needs to be met for there to be a perception of things. And I think we can now see that it is *actually* the case that our impressions are never fully separable. This is what the cohesion of the tacit *cogito* describes. This is no objection to the claim that only a transcendental unity of apperception, such as that described

by Kant, would suffice to provide for the sort of necessary unity required by the standard of justification—it is an objection only to the claim that such a transcendental unity of apperception is a condition for perception. For, of course, it remains possible to imagine our impressions as distinct from each other, by abstracting them from the horizon of sense that informs them, just as one can abstract notes from the melody to which they belong and arrange them in a different order. But that one *can* so abstract our experiences does not entail that their tacit unity is merely arbitrary. This is easy enough to see if we consider that if one intended this abstraction and rearrangement to be actual, one would sense it to be wrong, for each impression is given with a horizon of sense that constrains the way we arrange experience. It would be evidently absurd to take some moment of my experience, defined by its internal relation to my other experiences, as a self-contained experience, or to attribute it to some other field of experience.[12] In other words, my apprehension of the unity of this field is motivated by its tacit unity, by the very sense of the experiences in question. And it is only when we approach experience with the standard of justification (i.e., when we seek a *necessary* connection between our impressions), that this sort of cohesion appears to be inadequate. In a pattern with which we are now familiar, the problem about identity that Kant solves with the transcendental unity of apperception arises only at the reflective level.

Before moving on, let me briefly note that just as the perception of a time order can motivate judgments of time order, so the tacit cohesion of the self can motivate judgments of self-identity.[13] First, as we saw above, Merleau-Ponty claims it is only because we have a tacit self-awareness that we can, in reflection, explicitly attribute the "I think" to our experiences. Second, the cohesion over time of tacit self-awareness allows us to identify explicit self-consciousnesses at distinct moments. Once one has attributed the "I think" to distinct experience, one can subsequently identify the "I" common to these experiences in order to arrive at a judgment of personal identity between two such apperceptions. I can do this, however, only if there is a prepersonal cohesion of these two apperceptions. As we have already seen, pre-personal existence is a field, and so it coheres with itself throughout the stream of experiences. Apperception merely adverts to this field. My apperception at the present moment can be identified with my apperception at a previous moment because both are ways of expressing the field of experience at some particular experience, and this field has cohesion with itself.[14]

There is thus a pre-reflective contact of myself with myself (a tacit cogito) that allows me to reflectively identify myself over time. But while the spoken

cogito is thus founded on the tacit cogito, Merleau-Ponty argues that the tacit cogito conversely stands in need of the spoken cogito. The spoken cogito determines and clarifies what is only vague and indeterminate in the tacit cogito:

> The consciousness that conditions language is . . . merely a comprehensive and inarticulate grasp of the world [*La conscience qui conditionne le langage n'est qu'une saisie globale et inarticulée du monde*], like that of the child upon his first breath, or of the man who is about to drown and who frantically struggles back toward life. And if it is true that every particular piece of knowledge is established upon this first perspective, then it is also true that this first perspective waits to be reconquered, fixed, and made explicit through perceptual exploration and through speech. . . . The tacit *Cogito* is only a *Cogito* when it has expressed itself. (*PhP*, 426)

Thus, prepersonal cohesion both founds and stands in need of determination by personal identity—in other words, prepersonal cohesion motivates personal identity. There is, then, actually a sort of personal identity motivated within the course of experience. Founding personal identity on prepersonal cohesion admittedly does not suffice to meet the standard of justification, since it provides personal identity with no necessity, but it does show that personal identity is grounded in experience, and so not a mere fiction.

THE UNITY OF TRANSCENDENTAL AND EMPIRICAL APPERCEPTION

Now let me turn to my second point: that Kant's reflective account of the self draws on the pre-reflective experience of the self in a manner that Kant does not recognize. Specifically, my claim will be that Kant requires this pre-reflective experience of the self in order to hold that transcendental and empirical apperception intend the same subject. In other words, I do not see how Kant, on the terms of reflective judgment alone, can account for the fact that these two kinds of apperception intend the same subject.

Merleau-Ponty articulates the problem I wish to pose in the "Temporality" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Perception*. There, he writes, "We will never

understand how a thinking or constituting subject can posit or catch sight of itself within time. If the I is Kant's transcendental I, then we will never understand how it could ever merge with its own wake in inner sense, nor how the empirical self remains a self at all. But if the subject is temporality, then self-positing ceases to be contradictory because it expresses precisely the essence of living time" (*PhP*, 449). According to Merleau-Ponty, the problem with Kant's view of the self is that it fails to account for how transcendental and empirical apperception can "merge"—how if the former is a self, the latter can be as well. Fundamentally, this is a problem of intentionality: How do transcendental and empirical apperception intend the same subject at all? In Merleau-Ponty's view, Kant's transcendental apperception and empirical apperception can intend to the same "I" only homonymously. But transcendental and empirical apperception are supposed to name different ways of cognizing the same subject. One could, I think, also pose this as a problem of reference: How do thoughts and statements grounded on transcendental and empirical apperception refer to the same "I"?

Two considerations that might help motivate this problem are as follows: First, transcendental apperception, even though it is supposed to intend the same I as does empirical apperception, does not allow us to cognize anything about that I. This is a striking dissimilarity between apperception and the categories. A category like causality does, of course, differ in content from intuitions of temporal manifolds. But the latter can legitimately be "brought" under the former to yield cognitions. In contrast, the intuition delivered in empirical apperception provides no content to the I of transcendental apperception (e.g., *CPR*, B 157–58). This is why transcendental apperception does not result in any *cognition*, but only a thought or a consciousness—hence the Paralogisms. Second, transcendental and empirical apperception intend the I under different properties: I am transcendentally constrained to think of the subject as identical throughout its experience, as existing, and as spontaneous, but these ways in which I must think the subject cannot be confirmed in experience. My point is not so much that one and the same I cannot have contradictory properties or must have a single intuitive or predicative content—the failure of the two kinds of apperception to meet these criteria is a plausible consequence of Kant's transcendental idealism—as that *for* not meeting these criteria, it is far from clear how we know to refer statements grounded in transcendental and empirical apperception to the same subject at all. There would be no basis, on Kant's account, for this reference, since not only is there no overlap between the two—intuitive or judicative—but the two present the

I with incompatible designations (e.g., as active as opposed to passive). This leaves Kant with no clear description of how we can identify the I in which there is time with the I that is in time.[15]

That this is a live question for Kant seems to me indicated by the related question he asks in §24 of the B-Deduction:

> But how . . . can the *I* who thinks be distinct from the *I* that intuits itself, and yet be the same as it by being the same subject? And hence how can I say: I, as intelligence and *thinking* subject, cognize *my*self as an object that is *thought*, viz., I so cognize myself insofar as in addition I am also given to myself in intuition—except that I cognize myself, as I do other phenomena, not as I am to the understanding, but as I appear to myself? This question involves neither more nor less difficulty than does the question as to how I can be an object to myself at all, viz., an object of intuition and of inner perceptions. Yet so it must actually be. (*CPR*, B 155–56)

Here, Kant is troubled by the fact that inner sense presents us not as we are in ourselves, but only as we appear to ourselves. What is troubling in this situation is that we intuit ourselves only as we are "inwardly affected" (i.e., in inner sense we are passively related to ourselves). Just as I passively receive a manifold of intuition in perceiving external objects, so in inner sense I passively receive a temporal manifold of the determinations of my state. This is paradoxical because I am an active being (the understanding is spontaneous), yet I receive myself only passively. Kant notes that some are tempted to resolve this paradox by assimilating apperception to inner sense (our activity to our passivity), but that this will not do: we know that the two are different because apperception *determines* inner sense. Inner sense, by itself, delivers an indeterminate manifold of intuition, which can be organized into determinate perceptions only in virtue of the understanding's activity of combination. As we have seen, Kant argues in §§15 and 16 of the B-Deduction that such combination is possible only through the synthetic unity of apperception. Thus, it is only through the synthetic unity of apperception that inner sense is determined. Apperception and its synthetic unity *affect* or *act* upon inner sense. Consequently, inner sense and apperception cannot be the same thing.

The problem, in other words, is that the I is active, but can be given only passively. An important footnote to §25 makes this point more clearly:

> The *I think* expresses the act of determining my existence. Hence the existence [of myself] is already given through this *I think*; but there is not yet given through it the way in which I am to determine that existence, i.e., posit the manifold belonging to it. In order for that manifold to be given, self-intuition is required; and at the basis of this self-intuition lies a form given a priori, viz., time, which is sensible and belongs to the ability to receive the determinable. Now unless I have in addition a different self-intuition that gives, prior to the act of *determination*, the *determinative* in me (only of its spontaneity am I in fact conscious) just as *time* so gives the determinable, then I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being; instead I present only the spontaneity of my thought, i.e., of the [act of] determination, and my existence remains determinable always only sensibly, i.e., as the existence of an appearance. But it is on account of this spontaneity that I call myself an *intelligence*. (*CPR*, B 157–58)

As we have already seen, apperception actively determines the manifold given in intuition, and, conversely, this manifold is passive with respect to the understanding's determining it. Kant thus calls apperception the "determinative" and the manifold of intuition the "determinable." The central conjecture is that I have intuition of myself only as determinable, never as determinative. I know that there is a "determinative" in me, because I am conscious of its spontaneity (i.e., I am conscious that I determine the manifold of inner sense). But inner sense does not deliver this determinative self. If it did—just as time gives the determinable—I would have an intuition of myself as active (i.e., I could "determine my existence as that of a self-active being"). Lacking this intuition, I have the mere thought of my spontaneity, but I have no means to *cognize* myself as I am in myself (i.e., as a self-active being). Instead, I can cognize myself only as a passive object (for this is how I necessarily appear under the form of inner sense), never as the active subject that I am in myself.

But this sharp distinction between passive inner sense and active apperception has to be reconciled with the fact that we are not talking about two distinct I's. Kant resolves this issue with the claim that we intuit ourselves not as we are, but only as we appear: "We intuit ourselves through [inner sense] only as we are inwardly affected *by ourselves*; i.e., we must concede that, as far as inner intuition is concerned, our own [self as] subject is cognized by

us only as appearance, but not in terms of what it is in itself" (*CPR*, B 156). In other words, Kant aims to resolve the issue through his transcendental idealism about time: inner sense gives the I according to the form of inner sense (namely, time), but things in time are appearances and not things in themselves, and so inner sense gives the I not as it is in itself, but as it appears under the form of time. Or we might say, Kant divides the determinative I (the active I of transcendental apperception, or the noumenal self of which I have a bare consciousness of the existence and spontaneity in transcendental apperception) from the determinable I (which I empirically intuit) across the boundary between thing-in-itself and appearance.

This solution explains how it is possible that the empirical and transcendental apperception *can* in principle intend the same I, but it gives us no basis for actually doing so. What is mysterious on Kant's account is *why* we think of these as the same. Why do we not think them as two totally distinct ontological levels: determined being and determinative subject? Kant's genius is to think this ontological difference between the determined and the determinative—object and subject, the empirical and the transcendental—radically, but in doing so he leaves inexplicable how these two belong together. Indeed, on my view, Kant's account lacks the very resources to explain how we could ever identify these as the same I. Admittedly, such an explanation may simply not be a part of Kant's project: perhaps he draws on this identity as pre-given. But then his project presupposes this identity, and for his project to make sense for us, we will have to understand how this identity is possible.

To see how these two intend the same subject, we would need to provide an account of a sort of apperception in which the determinative and the determined coincide. If there were such an apperception, it could plausibly underlie the distinction between empirical and transcendental apperception, as the resource upon which one would rely in order to refer thoughts or statements grounded upon each to the same subject. Merleau-Ponty's aim in the "Cogito" and "Temporality" chapters is to describe precisely this sort of apperception, namely, in terms of the pre-reflective or tacit cogito. Merleau-Ponty's work in these chapters is some of his most difficult, and, admittedly, providing a complete exposition of these chapters would be impractical in a book on Merleau-Ponty's epistemology. But my aim here is relatively modest, namely, to offer a sketch of how Merleau-Ponty's account of the self could be used to ground Kant's account of empirical and transcendental apperception. In brief, the picture I mean to sketch out is as follows: Supposing Kant

is right, then at the reflective level we must think of two exclusive kinds of apperception. Through empirical apperception the self can never be cognized as active (as subject); and through transcendental apperception the self can never be cognized as passively received (as object). But at the pre-reflective level, the self as subject and the self as object coincide. Every apperception at this level is reversible (i.e., can intend the self as active or passive, subject or object). The pre-reflective self—that of the tacit cogito—*both* passively synthesizes the flow of consciousness *and* is synthesized within the flow of consciousness.

The best way to make this difficult point is by turning to the phenomenological analysis of the passive synthesis of time. Recall that on Kant's analysis, apperception must be divided into, on the one hand, the temporal flow of consciousness (inner sense), and on the other, that which synthesizes this flow and so is not itself a part of the flow.[16] In contrast, the phenomenological tradition has argued that at the pre-reflective level, synthesizing consciousness *is itself* temporal and can be attended to as such (i.e., can itself be synthesized within the flow of consciousness).[17]

To bear out these points, I will make a brief excursus into Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*. The passages I will consider are among the more challenging and contested passages of Husserl's corpus, and so to keep this material manageable, I will steer clear—as much as possible—from its complexities (I will not even consider, for example, his later thinking in the C-Manuscripts).[18] What results is a simplified version of Husserl's account, but is, in my opinion, the version Merleau-Ponty has in mind when he writes about the relation between the self and temporality.

In the third section of his 1905 "Lectures on the Consciousness of Internal Time," Husserl distinguishes three levels in the constitution of temporal objects: (a) empirical objects in objective time (e.g., a tone sounding or a ball rolling); (b) the "multiplicities of appearance," which serve to constitute these temporal objects (e.g., the temporal adumbrations of a tone, or the adumbrations of the ball rolling); and (c) the "absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness" (cf. *PCIT*, §34).[19] In perception, we are given objects that persist through time. For example, I hear a siren wail. This sound persists for a period of time, say from T_1 to T_2 to T_3, and I recognize it as a single sound throughout the time of its sounding. At no particular time is the entire duration of the sound immediately given. At T_2, for example, the sound at T_1 and the sound at T_3 are not perceptually given. Yet I experience the siren not as

instantaneous, but as perduring. This is possible, according to Husserl, because at T_2 I have a retention of the sound I perceived at T_1 and a protention of the sound as continuing (of the sound at T_3). To perceive the enduring wail of the siren, then, I must maintain a series of temporal adumbrations (T_1, T_2, T_3) of the sound, which I apprehend as a unity. We can thus distinguish the temporal object itself from the series of adumbrations that constitutes the temporal object as a unity.

These temporal adumbrations belong to the flow of consciousness. If we reflect on our consciousness, we find an ever-changing set of temporal processes: my perception of the siren unfolds and gives way to a perception of the table before me, which gives way to a thought of my work, which gives way to feelings about this work, et cetera. And, as Hume and Kant had recognized, there is no constant and enduring content of this flow. As Husserl puts it, "No phase of this flow can be expanded into a continuous succession; and therefore the flow cannot be conceived as so transformed that this phase would be extended in identity with itself. Quite to the contrary, we necessarily find a flow of continuous 'change'" (*PCIT*, 78). Consciousness thus consists of an ever-changing flow of particular temporal processes.

Now, this flow itself should be distinguished from the temporal processes that take place within it. Husserl's argument for this distinction runs as follows: It is a property of any persisting object that it can change at differing rates. Say a tone is modulated to change gradually from high-C to low-C. This change could occur rapidly (perhaps over the course of a second) or more slowly (over the course of a minute), or, at the limit, the tone could remain at rest. The flow of consciousness, however, has an in-principle constant rate of change. Because the flow of consciousness is not itself the unfolding of any enduring content, it cannot change more or less rapidly, but only at a constant rate.

The interesting part of Husserl's account, for my purpose, is his claim that in the case of the flow of consciousness, constituting and constituted coincide. Husserl arrives at this claim initially to avoid the threat of regress. The problem can be put, in a relatively simple form, as follows: The temporal flow of consciousness—which is the constitutive condition of any temporal object—can itself be made into a temporal object. Husserl writes, "To be sure, in a way [each phase of the flow] is also an objectivity. I can direct my regard towards a phase that stands out in the flow or towards an extended section of the flow, and I can identify it in repeated re-presentation, return to the same section again and again, and say: this section of the flow" (*PCIT*,

118). This is true both of particular phases of the flow and of the flow as a whole. But if the flow of consciousness can be turned into a temporal object, it seems that some further consciousness will be required in order to constitute this object. Since this further consciousness would itself admit of being treated as a temporal object, and so require a further consciousness, this line of thinking leads to a regress (cf. *PCIT*, 294–95).

Husserl's solution is to claim that in the case of the temporal flow, the constituting and the constituted must coincide. Specifically, Husserl claims that the flow of consciousness contains a double intentionality: a "transversal" intentionality, which intends temporal objects; and a "horizontal intentionality," through which the flow coincides with itself (*PCIT*, 86–87). While the former serves to constitute empirical objects, the latter serves to constitute the flow itself as a unity. Husserl writes, "The flow of the consciousness that constitutes immanent time not only *exists* but is so remarkably and yet intelligibly fashioned that a self-appearance of the flow necessarily exists in it, and therefore the flow itself must necessarily be apprehensible in the flowing. The self-appearance of the flow does not require a second flow; on the contrary, it constitutes itself as a phenomenon in itself. The constituting and the constituted coincide" (*PCIT*, 88). Thus, the temporal flow simultaneously constitutes temporal objects and constitutes this very constituting activity as a unity, and in this sense is constituted precisely as constituting.

Now, in Husserl's view, constituting and the constituted do not coincide "in every respect." He argues that the constituted and the constituting phases of the flow are not identical, because the constituted phases are past phases presently being constituted retentionally.[20] Constituting and constituted phases are thus temporally distinct, even while the latter are retained within the former. Elsewhere, Husserl distinguishes the two as follows: "If we speak of the perception of the sound, then here as everywhere else we must distinguish between this perception as absolute consciousness and the *objectivated* perception—more precisely, the perception as *object* of the perception reflecting on it" (*PCIT*, 296). In other words, we can distinguish between a perception as constituting (as the flow of absolute consciousness) or as constituted (as objectivated). Husserl spells out this distinction in the following passage: "The absolute consciousness lies, so to speak, before all positing of unity, that is, before all objectivation. Unity is unity of objectivation, and objectivation is precisely objectivating but not objectivated" (*PCIT*, 296–97).[21] Note that "constitution" and "objectivation" are here essentially equivalent, and play the same role as "determination" does in Kant's language, for

Husserl is saying that the absolute flow of consciousness lies prior to constitution (objectivation or determination), as that which is constituting (objectivating or determinative) and therefore not constituted (objectivated or determined).

So, constituting and constituted do not coincide "in every respect," and yet the very thing that constitutes temporal objects (the flow of consciousness) can itself be constituted as an object. It is this thought—that constituted and constituting coincide in the passive synthesis of time—that Merleau-Ponty sees as the distinctive feature of pre-reflective apperception.[22] To revisit the quote with which we began this section, Merleau-Ponty sums up his thinking as follows:

> We will never understand how a thinking or constituting subject can posit or catch sight of itself within time. If the I is Kant's transcendental I, then we will never understand how it could ever merge with its own wake in inner sense, nor how the empirical self remains a self at all. But if the subject is temporality, then self-positing ceases to be contradictory because it expresses precisely the essence of living time. . . . The originary flow, says Husserl, does not merely exist, for it must necessarily give itself a "manifestation of itself," otherwise we would need to install behind it another flow in order to become conscious of it. Time "constitutes itself as a phenomenon in itself"; it is essential to time to be not only actual time or time that flows, but also time that knows itself. (*PhP*, 449–50)

Merleau-Ponty's conclusion is stronger than what I'll defend here (for he claims that Kant is in error), but it gets to the point I am trying to make: the pre-reflective experience of self necessarily underlies the reflective experience of self given expression in Kant. This is precisely because, as we have just seen, at the pre-reflective level, constituting and constituted coincide. Or, as we might also put it, the pre-reflective experience of self is "reversible": pre-reflective experience, as ambiguous, is capable of motivating two exclusive sorts of apperception, namely, constituting and constituted, transcendental and empirical.[23] Consequently, it is just the reversibility of the pre-reflective experience of the self that allows transcendental and empirical apperception to intend the same subject. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty claims, "If even our purest reflections in fact retrospectively appear to us as in time, and if our reflections upon the flow are inserted into the flow, this is because the most

precise consciousness of which we are capable is always found to be affected by itself or given to itself, and because the word consciousness has no sense outside of this duality" (*PhP*, 450).

The essential point is that whereas the self as subject and the self as object are opposed in Kant, for Husserl and Merleau-Ponty they coincide. According to Husserl, it is just the flow of consciousness that constitutes the flow of consciousness as an object. Any phase of the flow (or indeed the flow as a whole) that is currently functioning as absolute subject in constituting temporal objects can in turn be objectivated. We can, of course, still distinguish between subject and object here—in terms of which temporal phase is objectivating (present) and which is objectivated (past)—but crucially the two coincide, in the sense that it is the same thing that is both subject and object. In contrast, as we have seen, there is no coincidence between passive and active self in Kant. Our intuition of self does not allow us to cognize anything through transcendental apperception, and so no temporal position can be attributed to the I of transcendental apperception. In other words, transcendental apperception is not determinable (i.e., it cannot give the subject as an object of awareness). In sum, for Kant, the constituting can in a sense be constituted, since we are given the self as an object in empirical apperception—but it can be constituted only *as* constituted (i.e., as an *object* of experience). It cannot be constituted *as* constituting (i.e., as the *subject* thought in transcendental apperception). The point of introducing the phenomenological account of time consciousness, here, is that it provides a framework for thinking that the constituting can be constituted *as* constituting. This is the real consequence of describing the pre-reflective experience of self as reversibly constituted and constituting.

Obviously, the distinction here is subtle and requires further work. But we can at least note that it is the pre-reflective or tacit nature of this apperception that makes it reversible. Consider that at the level of explicit or focal consciousness, the constituting cannot constitute itself while it is constituting some temporal object, precisely because it is attending to that object. After its constituting work is done, I can attend to that constituting activity and constitute it as a temporal object. But when I do so, it is precisely no longer constituting. So, there is no resource for me to constitute it *as* constituting—it would be for me a mere temporal object. But if we introduce a marginal or tacit self-consciousness—what Husserl calls the "horizontal" intentionality—this problem dissolves. For precisely while consciousness is focally constituting some temporal object, it can maintain a marginal self-consciousness

of itself *as* constituting. This marginal awareness of itself as constituting allows the I, after the fact, to focally constitute itself *as* constituting (or rather, as having been constituting). Thus, this pre-reflective self-awareness allows us to make sense of the reversibility of the temporal flow (i.e., to understand how the constituting and constituted can intend the same subject). While the transcendental unity of apperception cannot occupy any definite temporal position, then, there is a sort of consciousness of myself as spontaneous, that is, as constituting, that can. And that the determinative can be so determined entails that the determinative and the determinable intend the same subject.

As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "This ultimate consciousness is not an eternal subject that catches sight of itself in an absolute transparency, for such a subject would definitively be incapable of descending into time and would thus have nothing in common with our experience; rather, ultimate consciousness is consciousness of the present. In the present and in perception, my being and my consciousness are one" (*PhP*, 448). The problem at the reflective level arises because reflection distributes the constituting and the constituted self into the category of the atemporal, on the one hand, and the intratemporal, on the other. But a phenomenology of the self leaves no ultimate barrier between the self that constitutes the flow of time (what at the reflective level will be called transcendental) and the self that is constituted within the flow (what at the reflective level will be called empirical). Instead, it describes subjectivity as the ambiguous situation in which the constituting and the constituted coincide without being indistinguishable. Since reflective thinking lacks the resources to explain how these apperceptions can intend the same subject, it must rely on the pre-reflective experience of self to do so. This line of thinking does not rule out Kant's account of apperception as a possibility for reflection, but it does show this account to be partial and reliant on pre-reflective apperception. The ambiguity of this pre-reflective apperception, when raised to the reflective level, motivates two opposed sorts of apperception: of the self as a purely active subject (what is given in transcendental apperception); and of the self as a purely passive object (what is given in empirical apperception). This is a consequence of the reversibility of pre-reflective apperception: each of these types of apperception has motivational roots in the ambiguity of pre-reflective experience. In virtue of this shared root, the two can intend the same subject. Taken by themselves, there is nothing that holds these two sorts of apperception together. But taken as interpretations of the pre-reflective experience of the self, the two intend the same subject.

My point, in the previous section, has not been that the distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception must be abolished, only that it is not stable. In fact, perhaps it should be maintained, for Kant is right that empirical apperception does not suffice to *justify* the thought of self-identity, while perhaps transcendental apperception does.[24] But this is a weighty question, one that I will not attempt to answer here. At any rate, we can now say that if this distinction is to have its proper sense (i.e., if it is to demarcate two ways of intending the same subject), then it must rely on the ambiguity of pre-reflective apperception. For only if these two modes of apperception are motivated by the ambiguity of this pre-reflective experience can we see how they intend the same subject. Without this ambiguity, empirical and transcendental apperception simply intend different selves: one the universal form of all experience; and the other this particular experiencing subject. What is remarkable, in Kant, is that these two must somehow be the same, that the I of transcendental apperception is not simply a universal form, but names myself as I would intuit myself if my intuition were intellectual. The question is how these two apperceptions belong together, and it can be answered, I have argued, only by returning to the ambiguity of pre-reflective experience.

The return to motivation, then, does not exactly open the door to metaphysics, to "dialectical illusion," as Kant would have it. It does however put transcendental and empirical apperception into dialectic (i.e., it shows both types of apperception to be insufficient in themselves and to be parts of a larger whole). I do not mean, then, to affirm that rational psychology is in the right after all, only to show that the propositions of critical philosophy remain one-sided. In other words, something like speculative thinking, in Hegel's sense, is required. Hegel says of speculative thinking, "It consists solely in grasping the opposed moments in their unity. Inasmuch as each moment shows, as a matter of fact, that it has its opposite in it, and that in this opposite it rejoins itself, the affirmative truth is this internally self-moving unity, the grasping together of both thoughts, their infinity—the reference to oneself which is not immediate but infinite."[25] Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, it seems to me, is speculative in a related sense, for Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological effort is devoted to discovering the *ambiguity* of human nature underlying the antithetical judgments by which the understanding confronts experience. Merleau-Ponty writes that the sort of being referred to

by dialectic "abounds in the sensible world [i.e., the world of perception], but on condition that the sensible world has been divested of all that the ontologies have added to it" (*VI*, 92). The task of the dialectic, then, is "to shake off the false evidences." The method of the *Phenomenology of Perception* might well be described as dialectical in this sense, insofar as it, in each domain of perception, begins with the immediate evidence of the realist or empiricist standpoint, and then by exploring the inner insufficiency of this standpoint moves to the intellectualist or idealist standpoint. From the inadequacy of this standpoint, in turn, it moves to uncover the ambiguous situation of the phenomena themselves.[26]

It might seem odd to call Merleau-Ponty's thinking speculative or dialectical, given how often Merleau-Ponty cautions against what he calls the "bad dialectic." But Merleau-Ponty's worry is not about dialectic per se, but that dialectic readily turns from ambiguity to ambivalence. Following Melanie Klein, Merleau-Ponty defines "ambivalence" as "having two alternative images of the same object, the same person, without making any effort to connect them or to notice that in reality they relate to the same object and the same person" (*PrP*, 102–3). Such an attitude, for adult dealings, is often pathological, in contrast to which the ability to attend to ambiguity constitutes maturity: ambiguity "consists in admitting that the same being who is good and generous can also be annoying and imperfect. Ambiguity is ambivalence that one dares to look in the face" (*PrP*, 102–3). Ambivalence, in other words, is ambiguity that is ruled by contradiction. In contrast, ambiguity consists in grasping the contradictory terms in their unity. As Merleau-Ponty puts it,

> The dialectic is unstable . . . it is even essentially and by definition unstable, so that it has never been able to formulate itself into theses without denaturing itself, and because if one wishes to maintain its spirit it is perhaps necessary to not even name it. The sort of being to which it refers, and which we have been trying to indicate, is in fact not susceptible of being designated positively. . . . One of the tasks of the dialectic . . . is to shake off the false evidences, to denounce the signification cut off from the experience of being, emptied—and to criticize itself in the measure that it itself becomes one of them. But this is what it is in danger of becoming as soon as it is stated in theses, in univocal significations, as soon as it is detached from its ante-predicative context. (*VI*, 92)

Pre-predicative being, in its essential ambiguity, does not admit of univocal predicative significations; such significations are one-sided, and so lose sight of experience.[27] Consequently, Merleau-Ponty thinks that the dialectic will not obtain a new position that unites opposites in a new predication (it will not obtain "the In-itself-for-itself which is the height of ambivalence"), but will instead "rediscover the being that lies before the cleavage operated by reflection" (*VI*, 95). The task of phenomenology, then, is not to unite opposites, but to discover the dialectical ferment that precedes, underlies, and brings the opposition into being; to trace the lines of motivation from divergent judgments to their common perceptual ground.

What I have tried to do in the foregoing is to provide a sketch for such a project by considering how this phenomenological dialectic can be applied to a particular metaphysical question: that explored by Kant in the Third Paralogism, namely, the identity of the self. With respect to self-identity, our experience can motivate two quite different interpretations. On one interpretation, the self has a necessary identity with itself throughout its presentations. On another, there is no self-identity, but only a flux of presentations. The genius of Kant was to refuse neither interpretation, to grasp them together as two radically distinct kinds of apperception, the former transcendental and the latter empirical. But, as Merleau-Ponty points out and I argued in this chapter, Kant accomplishes this at the price of no longer being able to explain how these two kinds of apperception can both intend the self at all. In other words, Kant's treatment of the Paralogisms ends up in a situation of ambivalence. To comprehend the unity of the self, we must return to the ambiguous phenomenon that motivates both these interpretations, namely, the pre-reflective experience of self.

CONCLUSION

What I have tried to develop over the previous seven chapters is a genuinely Merleau-Pontian program for epistemology. This program leverages Merleau-Ponty's description of a sui generis logical space—namely, motivation, as the body's spontaneous responsiveness to norms—to describe the situatedness of knowledge within perceptual life. Offering such a description has suggested novel solutions, rooted in Merleau-Ponty's writings, to epistemological debates about perceptual justification, skepticism, a priori knowledge, and metaphysics. In sum, I hope to have both provided an interpretation and extension of Merleau-Ponty's epistemological ideas and shown that these ideas suggest a unique and compelling epistemological option.

What I would like to express, in concluding this work, is the ambiguity essential to the account I have provided. For if, against the empiricist, we admit that knowledge transcends perception, and simultaneously, against the rationalist, hold that perception founds knowledge, then we seem to be left with the curious thought that the contingent grounds necessary. That perception is contingent relative to knowledge is what led me to disagree with the empiricist. As we saw, for example, the Galilean account of motion expresses the world through a conceptual structure that, precisely for its power to incorporate, reconcile, and illuminate—in short, to comprehend—the perceptual structures of motion, is binding in a way that those perceptual structures themselves are not. But, on the other hand, in contrast to the rationalist, I have tried to demonstrate that perception is *not* a contingent feature of our knowledge, but necessary to it, and, conversely, our knowledge is contingent upon our perception. For example, the Galilean account could not be more binding than the perceptual structures of motion if those structures were not themselves binding (if they did not exert normative force, that is, if they were unmotivated). The ambiguity at the heart of this Merleau-Pontian account, then, is basically as follows: on the one hand, the necessary has a right against the contingent, since

it is more determinate, stable, and comprehensive; on the other, the contingent has a right against the necessary, for it alone sustains the necessary in its being for us. Certainly, it would be too much to conclude from the latter point that our perception is no more contingent than our knowledge. But what we *should* conclude is that there is no straightforward distinction between perception as the contingent and knowledge as the necessary. Instead, the two are moments of a common structure, the structure that Merleau-Ponty calls transcendence. He writes, "Existence is the very operation by which something that had no sense takes on sense, . . . by which chance is transformed into reason. . . . 'Transcendence' is the name we shall give to this movement by which existence takes up for itself and transforms a *de facto* situation. . . . Everything is necessary in man. . . . And everything is also contingent in man" (*PhP*, 173–74). In case it has not yet been made clear, my account is not exactly foundationalist, then, since what I have essentially tried to describe is just this movement of transcendence, and not a return to fixed foundations.

On the other hand, if perception, in founding knowledge, does not provide the latter with any fixed foundation, one might think our only option is to pursue some brand of antifoundationalism. One might, in other words, think that a contingent ground is no ground at all, at least in any relevant sense, and certainly not a ground of the necessary. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, for example, have concluded that in the absence of any secure ground for cognition, we ought to give up grasping after grounds altogether, and instead to embrace groundlessness.[1] In my view, such a conclusion shares with skepticism the false assumption that our beliefs are either justified or groundless. But our knowledge is not groundless—all I have denied to knowledge is ultimate justification (i.e., a ground that would be a resting point). Dillon puts it well in writing that "the argument that proceeds from the rejection of all absolutes [i.e., ultimate grounds] to the rejection of all grounds (and hence all truths) is specious. There are finite grounds, finite truths. It is on the finite ground on which we stand that we must base the truth that we need in order to live as long and as well as we do."[2] It is true, I have argued, that we do not exchange subjective modes of access to the world for purely objective determinations of the world, for the latter would have no sense and no truth for us without the former. And yet the genesis of knowledge provides us with a more stable and determinate grasp of the world. We approach the necessary, then, but only within the contingent. It is just this movement of transcendence that I have tried to get into view.

It is no objection to the Merleau-Pontian position that it describes our epistemological situation as ambiguous. In truth, human life consists in

negotiating such ambiguities, and we should not separate the project of knowledge from the life in which it is undertaken. Instead, we should consider that there is a certain authenticity or virtue proper to ambiguity—and indeed, every virtue may after all be proper to ambiguity, that is, a way of taking up the discrete domains of our ambiguity authentically, as courage, for example, is a way of taking up our mortality, the ambiguous situation of being a finite reason.[3] Or, in love we negotiate the ambiguous relation between self and other (see *PrP*, 154–55).[4] Or, Merleau-Ponty ends the *Phenomenology of Perception* with the figure of the hero, the one who "fully lives his relation with men and with the world" (483), that is, the one who successfully negotiates the ambiguous relation between self and world.[5] Just as Simone de Beauvoir distinguishes between a natural and an ethical freedom, so we might distinguish between a natural ambiguity and an ethical ambiguity; between the ambiguity that is our element (i.e., the medium of our existence), or is the condition into which we are born, and an ambiguity that is taken up and lived as ambiguous—or otherwise refused and lived in ambivalence.[6]

I would suggest that such virtues provide a model for handling our epistemic situation: what is required first is that we not dispel the ambiguity of our epistemic situation through a dogmatism that lays claim to an absolute evidence or a skepticism that denies the legitimacy of all evidence (*PhP*, 418). There are beliefs that are both contingent and at the core of normal adult life, such as perceptual faith. This faith is, as we have seen, contingent because it is not justified and because it is spontaneous—we could never be dissuaded from it, except in certain non-normal cases. But it is also at the core of human life, for, as Fichte showed, there is no such thing as a vocation if there is not a world in which it is exercised; or, as Susan Wolf has argued, love binds us to the world, for love intends not merely a representation of the other, but the other themself.[7] If we interrogate these fundamental beliefs, which are motivated and not justified, we will not be able to reject them, for they are the framework within which all acceptance and rejection must be made. Neither will we, in them, finally reach a ground on which we could rest. But I have argued that this does not mean that our beliefs are mere fictions, and it is possible, on the basis of the contingent, to progress in the necessary. The thesis of the primacy of perception, in founding knowledge upon experience, does not set us on a firm ground. It does not deliver an apodictic principle, such as the Cartesian *cogito*, nor a set of axioms from which a *mathesis universalis* would commence. But neither does it leave us groundless.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. That is, I take it that part of what it means to take knowledge as an experience is to describe it as it is available to something like first-personal reflection, as opposed to third-personal observation. There is a legitimate sense in using these terms in our formulation of the phenomenological project, as long as we approach this formulation with a certain caution, since according to Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenological method will require us to revise our very understanding of terms like the "first-person" or the "I."

2. Henry Pietersma, *Phenomenological Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10. There are, of course, other worries concerning thinking phenomenologically about epistemology. For example, one might derive such a worry from Dennett's argument that phenomenology is not an admissible method for investigating consciousness. Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1991). For responses to Dennett's argument, see Dan Zahavi, "Killing the Straw Man: Dennett and Phenomenology," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6 (2007): 21–43; Taylor Carman, "Dennett on Seeming," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6 (2007): 99–106. I don't intend to address all such worries in this introduction, only to suggest that there is room for phenomenology to intervene in such debates. My hope is that the merit of this approach will be made apparent over the course of the following chapters.

3. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 2001), 166.

4. Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle: Book 1* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 192.

5. For a more extended treatment of the compatibility of Merleau-Ponty's use of psychology and phenomenological method, see Joel Smith, "Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenological Reduction," *Inquiry* 48, no. 6 (2005): section 3.

6. Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, trans. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), xxi. At the same time, Barbaras takes it that the very questions pursued in Merleau-Ponty's early work motivate this ontological turn, and so he proposes to treat these early works as an "introduction to ontology" (xxxiii). Indeed, Barbaras concludes that the ontological turn is not a break from phenomenology but its culmination: "We must not see Merleau-Ponty's ontology as opposed to the phenomenological enterprise; on the contrary, it is its fulfillment" (77).

7. Sebastian Gardner, "Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception," in *The Transcendental Turn*, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 294–323.

8. For example, another possible shift has been articulated by Besmer. He holds that there is a transition in Merleau-Ponty's middle period from an understanding of the relation between perception and linguistic meaning in terms of *Fundierung* to understanding meaning in terms of *Stiftung* (or institution). Kirk M. Besmer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology: The Problem of Ideal Objects* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 100–102.

9. Cf. Martin C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 51. Or, Morris has argued, in my view compellingly, that there is an ontological element in Merleau-Ponty's project from the start, albeit an element that is "often downplayed or overlooked" by Merleau-Ponty. David Morris, *Merleau-Ponty's Developmental Ontology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 58.

10. On the other hand, I think Pollard is probably right that there are important differences between the reduction as Merleau-Ponty practices it and as defined by Husserl, insofar as Merleau-Ponty thinks of the reduction as situated within and limited by our prior engagement with the world. Christopher Pollard, "What Is Original in Merleau-Ponty's View of the Phenomenological Reduction?," *Human Studies* 41 (June 2018): 395–413.

11. Gardner, "Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception."

12. It seems to me that Dillon is ultimately right to draw a correlation between an epistemological thesis (the primacy of perception) and an ontological thesis (the primacy of phenomena), and to write that "the thesis of the primacy of perception is properly phenomenological because . . . it asserts the ontological primacy of phenomena as its correlate" (*Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 53).

13. Many scholars have pointed out how Merleau-Ponty's epistemology ultimately depends on an ontology. Dillon, for example, further argues that it is Merleau-Ponty's ontological thinking that, by undermining dualism, makes Merleau-Ponty's account of knowledge possible, and so claims that "for Merleau-Ponty, epistemological problems are never treated as only that; rather he tends programmatically to search for resolution by looking for the ontological presuppositions underlying the standpoints within which such problems crop up" (*Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 4). Pietersma makes a similar claim (though one concerning the dualism of subject and object, rather than that of mind and matter) (*Phenomenological Epistemology*, 160). However, as my project will demonstrate, one does not need to begin from Merleau-Ponty's ontology to argue for his epistemology, at least for the sorts of epistemological questions I will be asking. Demonstration of Merleau-Ponty's ontology, it seems to me, requires an additional kind of consideration—in my view, a consideration of the transcendental nature of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and its relation to his accounts of *sens* and nature. This kind of consideration would supply an important complement to the present project—for it is implicated in my project—but is not an immediately necessary feature of my project.

CHAPTER 1. MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF MOTIVATION

1. No doubt Merleau-Ponty is comfortable invoking the concept of motivation so readily because he is borrowing the term from the phenomenological tradition. See, for example, Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Second Book: *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Boston, MA: Kluwer, 1989), section III, chapter 2 (hereafter cited as *Ideas II*); Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, ed. Marianne Sawicki, trans. Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki (Washington, DC: ICS, 2000), First Treatise, chaps. 3–5. Merleau-Ponty's description of motivation does have some distinctive features—especially his articulation of motivation in distinction from reason, to which I will return—but the core of his conception, namely, a form of grounding governed by meanings, comes directly from these authors. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty himself cites Stein for this concept (*PhP*, 503n17).

2. We are more familiar with motivation as a practical ground than as a perceptual or epistemic one. But it seems to me that motivation has a role to play in our description of each of these domains. Indeed, in what follows, I will borrow freely from all of them in order to describe motivation. I do not see a methodological problem in doing so, since we are dealing with a unitary phenomenon that emerges in each domain, namely, the constitution of a spontaneous sense, a meaning we do not create but find. Our existence gears into spontaneous meaning in every domain: perceptually, the world is spontaneously revealed as having a certain sense; practically, situations are spontaneously revealed as having meaning for my conduct. While motivation functions somewhat differently in each of these domains, it is nevertheless common to them.

3. As testament to the motivating power of the reflection, take the impression Knausgaard receives from a self-portrait of Rembrandt, how much of it has to do with the eyes and with the reflection they hold: "Old age. All the facial detail is visible; all the traces life has left there are to be seen. The face is furrowed, wrinkled, sagging, ravaged by time. But the eyes are bright and, if not young, then somehow transcend the time that otherwise marks the face. It is as though someone else is looking at us, from somewhere inside the face, where everything is different. One can hardly be closer to another person. . . . What is depicted here, what Rembrandt painted, is this person's very being, that which he woke to every morning, that which immersed itself in thought, but which itself was not thought, that which immediately immersed itself in feelings, but which itself was not feeling, and that which he went to sleep to, in the end for good. That which, in a human, time does not touch and whence the light in the eyes springs. The difference between this painting and the others the late Rembrandt painted is the difference between seeing and being seen." Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle: Book I*, trans. Don Bartlett (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 26–27. See Rembrandt's *Self Portrait at the Age of 63*. To reword this impression: it is the *eyes*, and their brightness, which deliver Rembrandt not as a mass of historical details, but as a *subject*, a power of seeing that transcends its thoughts, feelings, et cetera.

4. This point is difficult to grasp so long as we consider the body solely in terms of mechanistic physiology. Merleau-Ponty consistently argues against such a mechanistic

conception of the body. *The Structure of Behavior* is, in part, a sustained argument against this conception. See also *PhP*, part 1.

5. Though I will at times speak as if acts motivate other acts, there is a question here of whether it would be more proper simply to say that meanings motivate meanings. For example, Stein argues, "What appears as the motivator proper within a process of motivation is not the execution of the initial act, but rather the sense content of that act. *Lightning* turns into my motive for the expectation of thunder, not the *perception* of lightning" (*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 43). I don't wish to take a strong stance on this question, preferring the following formulation: one phenomenon motivates another *through* its meaning.

6. For more on Merleau-Ponty's concept of sense, see especially David Morris, *Merleau-Ponty's Developmental Ontology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 6–10.

7. Cf. Donald A. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 205.

8. Let me briefly indicate what I mean by this term, "structure," by a brief recourse to *The Structure of Behavior*. Merleau-Ponty introduces the category of "form" in *Structure of Behavior* in order to account for certain phenomena of the nervous system, such as reflexes. He writes there, "We will say there is form whenever the properties of a system are modified by every change brought about in a single one of its parts and, on the contrary, are conserved when they all change while maintaining the same relationship among themselves" (*SB*, 47). Form or structure is thus something like the concept of similar figures in geometry: a change in one of the parts makes the whole dissimilar, but if all parts are changed to maintain the same relationship, the whole is similar. Note that "form" and "structure" are not exactly identical for Merleau-Ponty (see Morris, *Merleau-Ponty's Developmental Ontology*, 64–65), but are interchangeable for my purposes.

9. Donnchadh O'Conaill, "On Being Motivated," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 12, no. 4 (2013): 579–95.

10. Wesley Morriston, "Experience and Causality in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 39, no. 4 (1979): 561–74.

11. O'Conaill, "On Being Motivated," 582.

12. O'Conaill accepts Morriston's criticism only in part: while Morriston is right that the motivated is only *prefigured* in the motive (but can be conceived without it), he does not recognize that *the state* of being motivated is logically dependent on what one is motivated to do (we cannot think of *being* motivated to do *X*, without thinking of *X*). However, even this qualification does not supply a logical interdependence between motivating phenomenon and motivated action, only between the state of being motivated and the motivated course of action (O'Conaill, "On Being Motivated," 583).

13. This description is somewhat misleading, as if perception furnished us with a set of independent motives, which then are integrated into some cohesive interpretation. In fact, each motive of our interpretation takes on its shape—its meaning and what it motivates—in virtue of the environment of motives to which it belongs. For example, the reflection in the eye only has the meaning of "reflection in the eye," and can so operate as a motive, in virtue of the totality of the perceptual scene (if it were a disconnected white patch, it wouldn't take on this meaning).

14. Of course, it is not uncontested that perception is genuinely normative. Some initial evidence for thinking it is, though, is supplied by the above appeal

to phenomenal contrast between perception and imagination. For more on this method, see Susanna Siegel, "How Can We Discover the Contents of Experience?," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 45, no. S1 (2007): 127–42. For a deployment of the method of contrast in this context, see Arnaud Dewalque, "The Normative Force of Perceptual Justification," in *Normativity in Perception*, ed. Maxime Doyon and Thiemo Breyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 178–95. I also find compelling Siewert's argument from the "Better Look Principle" (i.e., the principle that the better the look I get at something, the stronger my warrant for judging of it—though, as we will see in chapter 3, I doubt that judgment and warrant are the kind of normativity at play here). See Charles Siewert, "On Getting a Good Look: Normativity and Visual Experience," in Doyon and Breyer, *Normativity in Perception*, 17–37. Strictly speaking, these articles argue that perceptions norm judgments, whereas in this chapter I am considering the ways in which the perceptual field includes normative relations within itself—but many of the same considerations apply in the present case.

15. Cf. Hannah Ginsborg, "Normativity and Concepts," in *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*, ed. Daniel Star (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 989–1014.

16. Cf. *SB*, 115: "Again, one can think of the situations which set in motion the reaction of the player in a game of tennis: we would express this situation in a later analysis by saying that the direction of the ball, the angle which the trajectory makes with the court, the rotation with which the ball can be animated, the position of the adversaries and the dimensions of the court all contribute in regulating the strength and direction of the response, the manner in which the ball will be hit in return. But it is clear that the situation at the moment of the hit itself is not articulated so completely, even though with a good player all these determinations enter in."

17. See Stein's distinction between "rational motives" and "incentives" (*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 44).

18. Cf. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 130.

19. In this sense, Morris's distinction between "motion" (movement between two already determinate points) and "movement proper" (movement as engendering its own movement context) is a helpful way of capturing the kind of motricity at stake in motivation (*Merleau-Ponty's Developmental Ontology*, 203–5). Motivation is a "movement proper," insofar as it generates the determinate field of its movement.

20. This is something of a simplification, made in order to convey my point. I don't wish to claim that every perceptual sense requires a prior perceptual schema—otherwise, it would be unclear how we ever learn new perceptual schemata. See Merleau-Ponty's discussion of originary as opposed to second-order perception (*PhP*, 45–46). "Shipwreck" could also emerge on the perceptual scene as an original resolution of the perceptual givens. Here, too, it is a matter of transcending the perceptual givens, since the resolution is not contained in the problem. All I am pointing out here is that at least sometimes we fail to pick out perceptual senses when we lack the relevant perceptual schemata—as when we fail to distinguish between individual words spoken in a language we do not know—and such cases are helpful for noticing that a perceptual *motivatum* transcends its motives.

21. Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 44.

22. To see the element of risk here, consider Merleau-Ponty's "Cézanne's Doubt." There, Merleau-Ponty claims that Cézanne's style has its motives: the style of his predecessors, Cézanne's personal characteristics, and the subjects of his paintings are all partial grounds of his works. Cézanne's works, in other words, do not emerge from nowhere and without history. And yet Cézanne can only doubt the legitimacy of his work because none of these motives are necessary grounds of his work. The experience of doubt is the experience of lacking adequate ground, of not having anything to point to that would justify or excuse one's actions. The motives of Cézanne's works are thus not necessary grounds. Merleau-Ponty writes that "the artist launches his work just as a man once launched the first word, not knowing whether it will be anything more than a shout, whether it can detach itself from the flow of individual life in which it originates and give the independent existence an identifiable *meaning*" (*SN*, 19). The artwork doesn't *prove* itself, except with time. It cannot resort to preexisting standards of measure in order to demonstrate its value, as a mathematical theorem is demonstrated with necessity on the basis of certain preexisting premises. A novel style creates its own standards and awakens them in its audience. In other words, the artist's motives cannot contain the full content of what the artist creates. Merleau-Ponty writes, "The meaning of what the artist is going to say *does not exist* anywhere—not in things, which as yet have no meaning, nor in the artist himself, in his unformulated life. It summons one away from the already constituted reason in which 'cultured men' are content to shut themselves, toward a reason which contains [*embrasserait*] its own origins" (*SN*, 19). What makes an artwork original is that it "embraces its own origins" (i.e., that nothing before it grounds it adequately, with necessity—that nothing before it can prove its value).

23. Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 76.

24. T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 17.

25. Cf. the descriptions of motivation as a sui generis logical space in Donnchadh O'Conaill, "The Space of Motivations," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 22, no. 3 (2014): 440–55; Mark A. Wrathall, "Motives, Reasons, and Causes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 111–28; Wrathall, "Non-Rational Grounds and Non-Conceptual Content," *Synthesis Philosophica* 40, no. 2 (2005): 265–78.

26. Donnchadh O'Conaill has also made this point: "The intentional content of a state of being motivated is normative in that it presents an object as making a demand, and a certain course of action as an appropriate response" ("On Being Motivated," 584). Cf. O'Conaill, "Space of Motivations," 445. While O'Conaill raises this point specifically with regard to practical motivation, it applies equally well to motivation generally.

27. Of course, I am normatively required to affirm the belief supported by the best reasons, but not only do I not *have* to so judge, when I do judge in response to norms, I actively decide to do so.

28. Note that I am not specifying whether or not one's reasons are correct. One might colloquially call a reason that is in error "irrational." However, here, I treat anything as a reason that operates according to the norms and practices of reason.

Thus, even reasons that are "irrational" (mistaken) I will call reasons, because they are *properly* governed by the laws of reason—because they are judged correct or erroneous by the norms of reason and these norms are not external to their space of operation (as I claim the norms of reason are to motives), that is, because they belong to the logical space of reasons.

29. One might object that the above example can be accommodated by the view that motives are implicit reasons, by treating the conflict as one between two kinds of reasons. Certainly, we at times have conflicting reasons, so we can't conclude from the conflict of motivation and reason that motives aren't a kind of reason. But notice that in the case of the Müller-Lyer lines, not only are motivation and reason in conflict, but it is not at all clear how one would even go about describing one's motives in terms of reasons. In other words, not only is one's motive for seeing one line as longer than the other as a contingent matter of fact implicit, it is not even clear how one could make one's motive explicit. One can *speculate* about the "reasons" one has for seeing one line as longer than the other: perhaps the arrows make one line look like a protruding edge and the other like a recessed edge, such that the length of the line is interpreted differently. But this is just speculation, rather than an explication of an as yet implicit reasoning, and, moreover, this "reason" dissolves the moment it is actually treated as a reason (we can't take it seriously as a consideration in favor of).

30. I take these considerations to be related, since I can actively revise only explicit beliefs (though not every explicit phenomenon can be revised, e.g., explicit perceptions). If reasons must be actively revisable, it follows that reasons are explicit.

31. John McDowell, "The Myth of the Mind as Detached," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, ed. Joseph K. Schear (New York: Routledge, 2013), 47.

32. O'Conaill, "Space of Motivations," 448.

33. Merleau-Ponty argues that attention is transformative in the "Attention and Judgment" chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception* (see esp. *PhP*, 28–34).

34. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 117–19.

35. To fully understand the issue here, it would be helpful to refer to Merleau-Ponty's account of expression (I will consider expression in chapter 3). See Donald A. Landes, *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradoxes of Expression* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

36. Wrathall, "Motives, Reasons, and Causes," 119.

37. Taylor Carman, "Conceptualism and the Scholastic Fallacy," in Schear, *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World*, 175.

38. In response to arguments like this, McDowell has at times responded that such motives fall outside the scope of my action as a rational agent. See John McDowell, "Myth of the Mind as Detached," 51, 55. But if we take this line, I think we will be left with precious few instances of rational agency. We can hardly give expression to the ultimate grounds of our lives. If I reason back far enough into the grounds for my actions, will I arrive finally at the ground: Happiness? Duty? Care? Articulating such ultimate grounds is difficult, and yet surely pertains to our rational agency.

39. Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 44; Edmund Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, First Book: *General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014), §136; Husserl, *Ideas II*, 235.

40. Husserl, *Ideas II*, 232.

CHAPTER 2. THE PRIMACY OF PERCEPTION

1. Note that, following Merleau-Ponty, I do not draw any strict distinction between perception and experience, and I will use them interchangeably in the following. For example, neither I nor Merleau-Ponty conceive of perception as simply presenting a set of sensory properties that can be distinguished from a kind of "experience" that includes rich properties. However, I will at times employ the familiar distinction between perceptions (which are veridical) and perceptual experiences (which need not be). This distinction is important only to my argument in chapter 5. In other contexts, I will occasionally use both "perception" and "perceptual experience," more or less interchangeably, simply to signal that my claims in these contexts are not limited to veridical perceptions (for example, I will claim that perceptual experiences lack propositional content whether or not they are veridical).

2. We might explain passages like that just cited by distinguishing between knowledge in a loose sense (in which perception is "originary knowledge") and in a proper sense. For example, Merleau-Ponty writes that "the field of knowledge properly so called" is "above the perceived world" (*PrP*, 6).

3. Of course, Merleau-Ponty may not ultimately wish to endorse critical thought's account of knowledge, so some caution is needed here. But, the context of the above-cited passage suggests that Merleau-Ponty is describing in terms of "critical thought" a genuine phenomenon (not simply a misinterpretation of the phenomena), and one that does seem to fit the part of "knowledge": for example, much as he claims of knowledge, he writes, "We never cease living in the world of perception, but we go beyond it in critical thought" (*PrP*, 3). And at any rate, the above passage does provide a convenient introduction to a number of characteristics that Merleau-Ponty will want to attribute to knowledge.

4. See Walter Hopp, *Perception and Knowledge: A Phenomenological Account* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chap. 6, for an argument that perception does indeed have content. My account of perceptual content will not agree with Hopp's in every respect, but we share a broadly phenomenological view.

5. Of course, sensory contents do figure in perception in some way, but they are not that which is *intended* in a perception. For expositions and defenses of Merleau-Ponty's idea that perception is of things, see Taylor Carman, "Sensation, Judgment, and the Phenomenal Field," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50–73; Sean D. Kelly, "Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty," in Carman and Hansen, *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, 74–110; or Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Merleau-Ponty and "Phenomenology of Perception"* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 36–61. Admittedly, there are cases in which perceptual experience presents us simply with a sensation (e.g., a color), but these cases are best understood as situations in which the normal operation of perception, as presenting us with a thing, is disrupted. Merleau-Ponty writes, for example, "If I wish to enclose myself in one of my senses and, for example, I project myself entirely into my eyes and abandon myself to the blue of the sky, soon I am no longer aware of gazing and, at just the moment I wanted to give myself over to vision entirely, the sky ceases to be a 'visual perception' in order to become my current world. Sensory experience is unstable and wholly unknown to natural

perception, which is accomplished with our entire body all at once and opens onto an inter-sensory world" (*PhP*, 234).

6. Admittedly, the language of "propositional contents" is not Merleau-Ponty's, but I think that terminology does name something that Merleau-Ponty is genuinely interested in. Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty describes perceptual experience as pre-predicative (i.e., as possessing a structure distinct from and prior to that of predicative propositions). Merleau-Ponty writes, for example, that "the being of the perceived is . . . pre-predicative being" (*PhP*, 336).

7. See, for example, Tim Crane, "Is Perception a Propositional Attitude?," *Philosophical Quarterly* 59, no. 236 (July 2009): 452–69; Arnaud Dewalque, "The Normative Force of Perceptual Justification," in *Normativity in Perception*, ed. Maxime Doyon and Thiemo Breyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 180–84; Charles Travis, "Reason's Reach," *European Journal of Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2007): 225–48.

8. Of course, pre-predicative experience for Husserl can be explicative (i.e., can intend its object as having a set of determinations). See Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), §24. But the point is that only when we actively and explicitly determine an object in predication do we actually distinguish and synthesize a subject and predicate (§§49–50).

9. See Hopp, *Perception and Knowledge*, 103–6.

10. I also object to views, like Thau's, that perceptual content is not propositional, yet every perception is a relation to a proposition. See Michael Thau, *Consciousness and Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 2, sec. 9. Thau's prima facie reason for holding this view is that only by thinking of a perception as a relation to a proposition can we countenance the fact that perception serves as a basis for belief (*Consciousness and Cognition*, 74–75)—but I will deny just this assumption in chapter 3 (for perception can be nonpropositional and yet *motivate* our beliefs). Thus, I don't see a need to think of perceptions as relations to propositions.

11. Crane, "Is Perception a Propositional Attitude?," 460–65. Note that there is also a question about whether perception has conceptual content. I leave my account neutral with respect to this debate, since conceptuality turns out not to be an important part of my argument in the following and to leave my account acceptable to a relatively wide audience. However, though my account does not depend on this view, I think Hopp (*Perception and Knowledge*) provides a thorough and compelling treatment of the issue. Further, I should at least acknowledge that Merleau-Ponty (in my view) does not generally think of perception as having conceptual content. Of course, I'm not the first to attribute this view to Merleau-Ponty. See, for example, Hubert L. Dreyfus, "The Myth of the Pervasiveness of the Mental," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, ed. Joseph K. Schear (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15–40; Lilian Alweiss, "On Perceptual Experience," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 31, no. 3 (2000): 264–76; or, for a parallel point about motor intentional activity, see Sean D. Kelly, "Merleau-Ponty on the Body," *Ratio* 15, no. 4 (December 2002): 376–91. For a challenge to these interpretations, see J. C. Berendzen, "Coping with Nonconceptualism? On Merleau-Ponty and McDowell," *Philosophy Today* 53, no. 2 (2009): 162–73; Berendzen, "Coping without Foundations: On Dreyfus's Use of Merleau-Ponty," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18, no. 5 (2010): 629–49. It seems to me that while the nonconceptuality of perceptual content in Merleau-Ponty is at times overstated in the

literature, a careful reading of Merleau-Ponty cannot ignore his description of certain kinds of nonconceptual content. See, for example, Merleau-Ponty (*PhP*, 130): "Living thought . . . does not consist in the act of subsuming under a category."

12. For example, Merleau-Ponty claims that I understand that my companion and I see the same thing when we are both bodily present to it, in a way that I don't understand, for example, that I and the ancient Greeks behold the same Mount Hymettus (*PhP*, 428). The intersubjectivity of perception, in this sense, depends on direct bodily presence in a way that the intersubjectivity of an ideal object does not.

13. For more, see Peter Antich, "Merleau-Ponty's Theory of Preconceptual Generalities and Concept Formation," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (July 2018): 279–97.

14. See, for example, Merleau-Ponty's claim that knowledge expresses perceptual relations (*PrW*, 119).

15. See Merleau-Ponty's claim that the relation between thought and perception is one in which the former determines and makes explicit the latter (*PhP*, 414).

16. See Merleau-Ponty's description of the way knowledge takes up and continues perception's "silent thesis" (*PhP*, 45).

17. Another important difference between knowledge and perception is that the former, especially if we conceive it as abstract thought, depends on symbolization in a way that perception does not. Merleau-Ponty is certainly interested in the role of language and symbolization in the development of knowledge (see Merleau-Ponty's "The Algorithm and the Mystery of Language" in *PrW*), but I'll leave out this aspect of the transition from perception to knowledge in this study, since it would introduce a degree of complexity unnecessary for present purposes. For more on the role of symbolization in this process, see Samantha Matherne, "Merleau-Ponty on Abstract Thought in Mathematics and Natural Science," *European Journal of Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2018): 789–93.

18. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 2001), 25.

19. Note that, in line with my definition of "internal relation" above, and unlike Husserl, I do not conceive a foundational relation between two entities, *A* and *M*, as requiring that, for example, for *A* to exist, *M* must concurrently exist. I conceive foundation as a relation between meanings (e.g., *A* could not have the meaning *A* does if *M* did not have the meaning *M* does). This is not meant to exclude the possibility that some foundational relations involve necessary existence, just to broaden the scope of what we include in this category.

20. One worry about describing the relation between perception and knowledge as a *Fundierung* relation is that our intellectual grasp of perceptual structures necessarily seems to distort the latter. If the intellect intends to express the perceptual world, then, it seems like it necessarily fails. The intellect distorts perceptual structures in attempting to express them, because perceptual structures differ in kind from intellectual structures: for example, the former have an indeterminacy uncharacteristic of the latter. The intellect aims precisely to bring determinacy to perceptual structures, but in doing so, the worry goes, robs them of their proper character. This distortion can result in the sort of "objective thought" that makes it so difficult to conduct a phenomenology of perception. See Matherne, "Merleau-Ponty on Abstract Thought," for a treatment of this threat and a response to it. I think Matherne is right that the features of the intellect (determinacy and universality) that seem to distort perception are already present in perception to a degree, but also that transition from

perception to the intellect need not result in objective thought. Merleau-Ponty suggests a method of "hyper-reflection" (*VI*, 38) precisely to maintain awareness of the potentially distortive effects of this transition, and we might say that his phenomenology of perception is an exercise in such hyper-reflection.

21. Note that, for simplicity of presentation, I have been using the word "ground" somewhat ambiguously, to refer to both (a) that which grounds; and (b) the mode of grounding. When I speak of motivation as an epistemic ground, I mean "ground" in the second sense, namely, as a mode of grounding. When I claim that perception can ground knowledge, I mean "ground" in the first sense, as that which grounds. In claiming that motivation can describe the manner in which perception grounds knowledge, I mean that motivation is a mode of grounding in which perceptions can be that which grounds items of knowledge.

22. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube and C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 523a–525a.

23. Susan Carey, *The Origin of Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 403–4.

24. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, 195.

25. Again, the idea is also not that the subject is solely responsible for the epistemic normativity of perception. Rather, the subject is responsive to the normative significance of perception. Of course, the subject can be responsive to this significance only insofar as she is silently oriented toward certain norms, but this is not to attribute to her the normative significance to which she responds.

26. One might suspect that knowledge cannot be factive for Merleau-Ponty since he claims that our knowledge is ultimately never certain (*PhP*, 417). We say we know *p*, even though we are not absolutely certain that *p*. But the same could be said of perception: perception is factive, yet never absolutely certain. What I at present take for a perception may then eventually be revealed as illusion; similarly, what I at present take for knowledge may eventually be revealed as error.

27. Cf. Husserl's discussion of being inclined [*Geneigtsein*] by perception to judge in certain ways (*Experience and Judgment*, §76). Husserl insists this inclination should be distinguished from active position-taking. Instead, personal decision is said to be *motivated* by perceptual possibilities that incline me to judge in certain ways.

28. Merleau-Ponty's account does, however, differ from more reliabilist strains of virtue epistemology, such as Sosa's. Compare Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

29. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 271.

30. Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 270.

31. Abrol Fairweather, "Epistemic Motivation," in *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, ed. Abrol Fairweather and Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 68.

32. Fairweather, "Epistemic Motivation," 70.

33. One might think that the virtue epistemologist's notion of motivation is more subject-centered than the one I have been working with, on which motivation is a responsiveness to normative forces exerted by the phenomena themselves. I'm not sure this is true, however: the virtue epistemologist can be interpreted as claiming that only insofar as a subject accepts truth as a norm can she be motivated by the normative

significance of, for example, a new piece of information. As on my account, it is the information itself that motivates, but it can do so only if it stands out as normatively significant in light of the adoption of the relevant norms.

34. I think this may be more a difference of focus than an important structural difference between the two accounts. Take Merleau-Ponty's example of attending a friend's funeral. Here Merleau-Ponty described the motive for the journey as the friend's death, whereas Fairweather would more likely describe it as the desire to attend the funeral. But both of these components are obviously required for one to be motivated to attend the funeral: these are simply two aspects of the motive. Merleau-Ponty would not deny, I believe, that a subjective component is required in cases of motivation—even in cases of perceptual motivation (e.g., the reflection in the eye), he would allow that there must be an underlying desire to, or orientation toward, seeing the world as it is, in order for the reflection to motivate the perception of liveliness.

35. Another possible difference between these two accounts is that my account distinguishes between knowledge and other kinds of belief on the basis of whether motivation is appropriately responsive to normative forces, whereas the virtue epistemologist account focuses on how well attuned certain character traits are. I don't wish to enter an extended debate with virtue epistemology here, but it does seem to me that if someone who has character traits that are in certain ways not generally well attuned to normative forces, yet on a particular occasion is appropriately motivated in response to normative forces, then they on this particular occasion have knowledge. In this case, we must say that this person has knowledge because they were normatively motivated, and not because they were virtuously motivated. However, I think there is a real question about whether one *could* be normatively motivated without having appropriate character traits. Could one really be normatively motivated on a particular occasion without being generally well attuned to normative forces? The answer to this question does not obviously follow from what I have said so far and requires further treatment.

CHAPTER 3. EMPIRICAL JUDGMENTS

1. In fact, I hold that all of it is. I leave aside this claim for now in order to focus on the relation directly between perceptions and perceptual judgments. But it is worth acknowledging that I can have nonperceptual, mediate grounds for judgments about the objects of perception. For example, if a friend tells me that their new house is painted blue, I can believe that the house is blue without having seen it myself. Nevertheless, the *ultimate* ground of all our judgments about the objects of perception is perceptual. For example, the ground of my judgment about my friend's house is my friend's perception (and my perception of my friend's communicating their perception to me). In this chapter, I will not be concerned with these mediate relations between perceptions and perceptual judgments (though it would be interesting to consider the various species of such mediate relations), but only the immediate relation between perceptions and judgments directly of the objects of that perception (e.g., my friend's judgment about the color of their house).

2. Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," in *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, ed. Ernest Lepore (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 310.

3. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

4. Mark Wrathall, "Motives, Reasons, and Causes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 111–28.

5. For this designation, see McDowell, *Mind and World*, xii.

6. Davidson, "Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge."

7. McDowell, *Mind and World*, xii.

8. McDowell's question, then, is really: How is knowledge possible? Because this is McDowell's guiding question, his interest in experience extends only to its ability to ground knowledge. Rouse has formulated this insight by arguing that McDowell's interest in experience is normative rather than descriptive (i.e., in whether experience can be assessed in certain ways rather than whether it actually is certain ways). See Joseph Rouse, "What Is Conceptually Articulated Understanding?," in *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, ed. Joseph K. Schear (New York: Routledge, 2013), 250–71. Rouse thus thinks McDowell's interests are orthogonal to those of phenomenology, which are descriptive, such that it is not quite right to put them in dialogue. I think this formulation is too strong: McDowell really is interested in claiming that experience is a certain way, insofar as he thinks it must be some way in order to be appropriately normative (e.g., it must have conceptual content). Nor do I think it is really right to say that phenomenology is merely descriptive and not normative, as if it were uninterested in whether perception provides a normative ground for reason. Perhaps there is some distinction to be made between the two methods here, but even so there would be room for genuine dialogue between the two approaches, since, as I see it, both have normative *and* descriptive interests in experience.

9. Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 76.

10. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 8.

11. See chapter 1, n. 14, for related arguments about the normative character of perception.

12. I think this is the same kind of consideration McDowell and Wrathall have pointed out in objection to a causal account of this relation. See Wrathall's argument that a causal account of the relation between perception and judgment "does nothing to secure the connection between thoughts and particular occasions of those thoughts in the world." Mark A. Wrathall, "Motives, Reasons, and Causes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 124.

13. See also Ginsborg's reply to a similar objection, on behalf of McDowell. Hannah Ginsborgh, "Reasons for Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 72, no. 2 (March 2006): 297.

14. Wrathall has argued against McDowell on the grounds that the motives of our perceptual experiences are often unavailable for use as reasons for judgment: "An experience is able to provide rational grounding to the extent that it is available for use in inference and justification. Thus, we can conclude that if the experience that gives rise to the thought is not available for use in inference and justification, then the thought is not rationally grounded. . . . It is often the case that we are motivated by some features of our perceptual experience that are not available for use in thought

but that nevertheless dispose us (rather than cause us) to have the thoughts that we do. Thus, motives stand to the thoughts they motivate not in a way that justifies or supports them, but rather in that they impel us toward having them" ("Motives, Reasons, and Causes," 122–23). But I think this mistakes McDowell's case. For McDowell does not claim that every feature of perceptual experience that influences the way we see things is a rational ground for our judgments. Rather, McDowell claims that our perceptual experience (however it is grounded in the various features of experience) is available for thought, and so can rationally ground a judgment. While the reflection in the eye may not be available for use in judging that the portrait is lively, the perception of the portrait as lively *is*.

15. See, for example, John McDowell (*Mind and World*, 165); and McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," in *John McDowell: Experience, Norm, and Nature*, ed. Jakob Lindgaard (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 3–4.

16. McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," 12–13.

17. Note that all parties to the present debate are agreed that perception is not propositional. See Davidson, "Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," 310. While John McDowell did claim in *Mind and World* that experience has a sort of propositional content, namely, that "things are thus and so," he has since retracted this claim. See McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given."

18. McDowell, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," 3–4.

19. McDowell and I both, then, think of the relation between perception and judgment in terms of dispositions or inclinations. But I conceive this disposition in terms of motivation, whereas McDowell conceives it in terms of reason.

20. I think the same problem applies to all accounts of perceptual justification. Consider Hopp's phenomenological account of perceptual justification, which I otherwise find largely persuasive. Walter Hopp, *Perception and Knowledge: A Phenomenological Account* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chap. 7. This account suffers the same problem. According to Hopp, when a perception fulfills a judgment, that perception provides a prima facie justification for that judgment. But I take it that to count as justificatory, the relation would have to be revisable, which it is not. It would be better to think of fulfillment in terms of motivation.

21. Notice that I equally disagree with Evans and his defenders here. For a defense of Evans's position on this issue, see Richard G. Heck Jr., "Nonconceptual Content and the 'Space of Reasons,'" *Philosophical Review* 109, no. 4 (2000): 483–523; Hemdat Lerman, "Non-Conceptual Experiential Content and Reason-Giving," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81, no. 1 (July 2010): 1–23. I agree with McDowell, against Evans, that if perception is outside the boundary of activity, then it cannot stand in a rational relation to judgment. But I disagree with McDowell that we should think of the relation between perception and judgment as rational, as being able to "come under the self-scrutiny of active thinking." Similarly, I disagree with a position like Travis's that holds that the nonconceptual can bear a rational relation to the conceptual. What Travis calls "expertise," I would consider not as reason, but as being motivationally well-attuned to the normative forces of a situation, since as we will see, I don't think these relations meet the standard of reason. Charles Travis, "Reason's Reach," *European Journal of Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2007): 234.

22. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 53.

23. See also McDowell's discussion of what it means to *act* for reasons. John McDowell, "The Myth of the Mind as Detached," in Schear, *Mind, Reason, and*

Being-in-the-World, 47. There, too, the claim is that the agent need not be actively deliberating when acting, but *must be able* to give reasons for her action "straight off," reasons that upon further deliberation active thinking might ultimately spurn, that is, revise (48). I have already criticized this view in chapter 1, and I am here accepting McDowell's account of implicit reasons for the sake of argument.

24. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 52.

25. One might wonder if the alterations made by McDowell to his position in "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" or in his later work generally cut against this criterion, for McDowell's distinction between intuitional and discursive content does clarify his account of the rational relation between perception and judgment. But nothing in McDowell's later work, to my knowledge, undoes the revisability requirement. If, as McDowell claims in "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," it is true that perceptions *entitle* us to beliefs about the world, and it is in this sense that the relation between the two is rational, then perceptions must be revisable. For revisability is not a feature of inferential relations, but of entitlement. If it is true that some X entitles me to some Y, then if Y turns out to be incorrect, it must be either the case that X does *not* entitle me to Y, or the case that X must be revised. But, as I will argue, perceptions cannot be so revised. At most, judgments about perceptions can be so revised, but this does not say anything about the connection between judgments and perceptions.

26. Nor will it do to object that perception is a merely prima facie reason for judgment. Certainly, the objection goes, if *X* is an ultima facie reason for *Y*, then if we know *Y* to be false, we must reject *X* (or reject that *X* is indeed a reason for *Y*). But if *X* is just a prima facie reason for *Y*, then *Y*'s falsity need not entail *X*'s falsity; *X* can be true, and a consideration in favor of *Y*, though we have stronger countervailing reasons to think *Y* is false. But this objection is not to the point. My claim is that if something belongs to the space of reasons, then one would be able to revise it, were reason to require one to do so. The objection merely suggests that reason does not, as a matter of fact, require us to revise our perceptions. But this tells us nothing about perception's revisability, which is the matter at stake. All we need to know in order to establish that perception does not meet this criterion is to note that *were* reason to require us to revise our perception, we *would* not be able to do so.

27. Ginsborg, "Reasons for Belief," 286–318.

28. Dennis W. Stampe, "The Authority of Desire," *Philosophical Review* 96, no. 3 (1987): 343.

29. Ginsborg, "Reasons for Belief," 289–90.

30. Note that, while I have taken McDowell as a representative for the view that perceptions can justify beliefs, there are certainly other ways to hold that perceptions justify beliefs. In particular, one could take an epistemically externalist approach to warrant, such as Burge's account of "perceptual entitlement." See Tyler Burge, "Perceptual Entitlement," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67, no. 3 (November 2003): 503–48. On this account, there is more than one kind of warrant: justification (which requires access to one's warrant); and entitlement (which does not). We are entitled to a perceptual belief when, among other conditions, a perceptual state is "reliably veridical in the perceptual system's normal environment" (Burge, "Perceptual Entitlement," 532). Given Burge's externalism, he would surely not accept an active revisability requirement for entitlement. Further, according to Burge, having a perceptual appearance entitles one to a perceptual belief even if that perceptual belief is false (507). Consequently, the revisability issue does not accrue to

this kind of warrant. My account is not geared toward externalist positions, and so I can't provide an adequate response to Burge here without considerably extending this chapter. For simplicity's sake, note that I share familiar concerns about this sort of externalism and reliabilism. Though obviously this debate gets quite involved, I generally think Bonjour's classic response is basically right that for a reliable capacity to entitle, one must also know that the capacity is reliable. Laurence Bonjour, "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (1980): 53–73. While I think Burge is right to think that the view that the only kind of epistemic ground is reason-giving is hyperintellectualistic and can't describe the kind of epistemic grounding characteristic of child and animal beliefs ("Perceptual Entitlement," 504–5), Burge's solution to this problem makes us forgo the internality of knowledge unnecessarily. Part of the appeal of the Merleau-Pontian account I have been developing is that it avoids hyperintellectualism without requiring externalism.

31. For more background on the descriptions I will give, see Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, 33–37, 210, 395; Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Second Book: *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Boston, MA: Kluwer, 1989), §56 (hereafter cited as *Ideas II*); Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), §§68, 71; Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, ed. Marianne Sawicki, trans. Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki (Washington, DC: ICS, 2000), 48–52. Admittedly, Merleau-Ponty's account of this relation, on my reading, marks a significant departure from Husserl and Stein. Husserl and Stein specifically conceive this relation as one of "rational motivation." Thus, according to Husserl, the intuitive fulfillment of a judgment in perception, in motivating a judgment, justifies that judgment. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, First Book: *General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2014), §139 (hereafter cited as *Ideas I*). However, as I argued in chapter 1, on my reading "rational motivation" would be ambiguous for Merleau-Ponty: either amounting to a reason, in which case we have an instance of justification but not of motivation, or a motive that accords with reason, in which case we do not have an instance of justification.

32. To be clear, though, there is an added layer of complexity in Merleau-Ponty's point in its original context, namely, that the degree of fulfillment or motivation correlates to the kind of perception we are having: a true perception motivates a judgment, whereas a hallucination does not. Relatedly, he elsewhere writes that "confronted with the real thing, our behavior feels motivated by the 'stimuli' that fill it out and that justify its intention. When it comes to fantasy, the initiative comes from us and nothing responds to it on the outside" (*PhP*, 355). This point may create confusion at the present juncture, since, as we have just seen (*PhP*, 37), Merleau-Ponty claims that in the Zöllner illusion, the perceived signification of the figure "motivates and is, so to speak, *behind* the false judgment." So here it seems that false judgments can be motivated by perception. Cf. *PhP*, 273. The reason for this seeming discrepancy is that on page 36, Merleau-Ponty was discussing hallucination, and at page 37, he is discussing illusion. The idea, I take it, is that illusions are motivated by the perceived world in a way that hallucinations are not, and so are able to motivate or fulfill judgments in a way that

hallucinations cannot. In any case, the important point for us is just that perceptions and illusions can motivate judgments.

33. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 2001), 206.

34. Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 157–58.

35. For example, in *Ideas I*, Husserl argues that the intuitive fulfillment of a judgment rationally motivates, and so justifies, that judgment (§§136–39). The same idea is central to *Experience and Judgment* (e.g., 289, 303, 308, 312, etc.). Merleau-Ponty, in my view, follows Husserl quite closely in respect to the claim that the fulfillment motivates the judgment, though again the two differ significantly in how they conceive the relation between motivation and reason. See Hopp, *Perception and Knowledge*, chap. 7, for a strong version of Husserl's view. One might worry that, as Walsh has pointed out, Husserl's notions of motivation and evidence in the *Logical Investigations* are distinct. See Philip J. Walsh, "Husserl's Concept of Motivation: The *Logical Investigations* and Beyond," *History of Philosophy and Logical Analysis* 16, no. 1 (2013): 70–83. For example, the sight of smoke can motivate the thought of fire, even though it in no sense makes the fire *evident* to me. But, while it seems plausible to me that not all motivational relationships are evidential, this does not entail that *no* motivational relationships are evidential, nor that evidential relationships are not motivational. For example, in appendix 2 of *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl describes the way in which the *evidence* of a judgment of probability (and not just the judgment of probability itself) is motivated (394). Consequently, at least on Husserl's terms, nothing speaks against allowing that there are motivational relationships that are not evidentiating, while at the same time holding that the evidential relationship connecting experience and knowledge is a motivational relationship.

36. Of course, the Husserl of the *Logical Investigations* distinguishes between expression, as an act of meaning [*Bedeutung*], and perception, as an act of intuition. Cf. *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, Investigation VI, §4 and §8. But nothing compromises the account of fulfillment given there if we introduce the idea that perception has a kind of *sens* or meaning of its own, and, indeed, I would suggest that the fit between intuition and expression becomes all the clearer when we do.

37. For a more complete and precise account of what is puzzling here, see Bernard Waldenfels, "The Paradox of Expression," in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 89–102. Or, for a broader treatment of expression in Merleau-Ponty, see Donald A. Landes, *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradoxes of Expression* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

38. Maggie Nelson, *Bluets* (New York: Wave Books, 2009), 3–4.

39. Elena Ferrante, "Elena Ferrante, Art of Fiction No. 228," interview by Sandro Ferri and Sandra Ferri, *Paris Review* 212 (Spring 2015).

40. Ferrante, of course, emphasizes only the importance of the latter, the form. And, needless to say, the experience in question need not have actually occurred for its description to achieve "literary truth." But it seems to me that without contacting and opening some aspect of our experience, no literary form could achieve sincerity; there would not, in my view, be a question of "literary truth" here, because there would be nothing to which to be true.

41. Cf. Merleau-Ponty's claims about original perception, that it "cannot yet know its reasons, since it creates them" (*PhP*, 46).

42. Laurence Bonjour, "The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge," *Philosophical Studies* 30, no. 5 (November 1976): 290.

CHAPTER 4. UNIVERSAL AND A PRIORI JUDGMENTS

1. I term this kind of knowledge "a priori" for convenience, because it is the traditional candidate for knowledge had independently of experience, and *not* in order to assume that such knowledge can in fact be had independently of experience. A reader of Merleau-Ponty might be confused by this language, since at times Merleau-Ponty writes as if he wishes to eliminate the distinction between the a priori and the empirical altogether. For example, Merleau-Ponty writes that "from the moment in which experience—that is, the opening onto our factual world—is recognized as the beginning of knowledge, there is no longer any means of distinguishing between a level of *a priori* truths and a level of factual ones" (*PhP*, 229). Yet only a matter of lines after this passage, Merleau-Ponty claims that the diversity of the senses is an a priori truth, and on the next page distinguishes the a priori and the a posteriori as follows: "The *a priori* is the fact as understood, made explicit, and followed through into all of the consequences of its tacit logic; the *a posteriori* is the isolated and implicit fact" (*PhP*, 230). As Hall points out, Merleau-Ponty does not wish to eliminate this distinction, but to reconfigure it, such that the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* are not independent of each other but are, so to speak, two sides of a coin. See Harrison Hall, "The *A Priori* and the Empirical in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*," *Philosophy Today* 23, no. 4 (1979): 304–9.

2. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), 66.

3. David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," in *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2009), 540–41. Of course, few empiricists, prior to the twentieth century, are as rigorous about evidence as the principle E2 would demand. Most hold that there is some form of a priori justification (e.g., even Hume holds that we know "relations of ideas" independently of experience). I have introduced some simplification here, in order to present a relatively cohesive account of rationalism and empiricism.

4. Gottfried W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49.

5. While my stated goal in this chapter is to analyze the relation between perception and abstract or universal knowledge, it should be clear that this distinction between perceptual and intellectual meanings also concerns the relation between perception and individual judgments. My stock of intellectual meanings allows me to make individual judgments that I would not otherwise be able to (e.g., I can judge, "The toothpicks number 1,000"). In other words, though my central goal concerns universal knowledge, the intellectual structures I'll analyze as part of this process are also relevant to judgments of particulars.

6. This distinction between meanings that are available to perception (which are always particular) and perceptual structures (which are not particular, and so are not themselves available to perception) will create some ambiguities in the following. Nevertheless, the two are closely related, since perceptual structures serve to structure the meanings available in perception. Thus, while my general claim is that the meanings available to the intellect exceed those available to perception, this is also a claim about the difference between intellectual and perceptual structures, since the meanings available to perception and the intellect, respectively, are not indifferent to these structures. The claims that (a) the meanings available to perception and the intellect differ; and that (b) perceptual structures differ from intellectual structures, go hand in hand.

7. For a number of such problems, some of which are compelling in my view, see Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001).

8. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 1, ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 2001), 253.

9. See Edmund Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry," in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Inroduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 375–78.

10. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Norwell, MA: Kluwer, 1999), 15–16.

11. See *PhP*, lxxx: "The evidentness of perception is neither adequate thought nor apodictic evidentness."

12. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hacket, 1996), B 741–47; and *PhP*, 403–8. For more detailed examination of Merleau-Ponty's thinking about geometry, see Marjorie Hass and Lawrence Hass, "Merleau-Ponty and the Origin of Geometry," in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 177–88.

13. Admittedly, this analysis of Euclidean geometry is not entirely incontestable, for it is unclear that Euclidean geometry does not in fact do the best job of modeling real space. Specifically, to my knowledge, it remains in question whether general relativity—the classical evidence that Euclidean geometry is contingent—requires that space be non-Euclidean. The central point I wish to preserve of Merleau-Ponty's, however, is that this is a question that cannot be answered simply by appeal to an a priori intuition of space—it must be settled empirically—and so cannot count as apodictic evidence.

14. Importantly, for Merleau-Ponty, the situatedness of all evidence is, in part, a historical situatedness; our ideas are situated in a temporal horizon. In part for this reason, Dillon sees the a priori in Merleau-Ponty as "an historically emergent sense of the whole," grounded not in the structures of the mind, but in the phenomenal world. Martin Dillon, "Apriority in Kant and Merleau-Ponty," *Kant-Studien* 78, no. 4 (1987): 419. Dillon emphasizes that "the priority of the *a priori* is an historical priority" (418). But it seems to me important that we understand the historical situatedness of the a priori correctly, for it must not rule out that there are certain transhistorical structures of experience, for example, historicality itself, as well as "figure and background," "thing and nonthing," and the horizon of the past (*PhP*, 24). On

my reading, Merleau-Ponty is claiming that our *apprehension* of these structures will be historically situated, not that these structures are historically contingent. Perhaps Merleau-Ponty does have this latter thought—I am not convinced that he does, but my purpose here is not to deny that he does. I just think we can provisionally (though perhaps not ultimately) separate the epistemological question, about our apprehension, from the ontological question, about the structures themselves, and it is only the former question I am concerned with in the present study.

15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper, 1972), 43.

16. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 44.

17. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 27.

18. One might object that propositions known analytically (i.e., in virtue of the principle of noncontradiction), are presuppositionless. Indeed, it is in terms of something like this principle that Husserl defined apodicticity above: we know something apodictically when its negation is inconceivable—Schmid has even argued that apodictic evidence is not given in "transcendental experience" for Husserl, but in "reflection," when one attains the insight that the supposition of the nonexistence of a being in fact implies its existence. Hans B. Schmid, "Apodictic Evidence," *Husserl Studies* 17 (2001): 217–37. But first, this argument would depend on knowing the principle of noncontradiction entirely without presupposition. And second, I think Merleau-Ponty would follow Husserl here in distinguishing between "consequence logic" and "truth logic," where the former is governed by the principle of noncontradiction, and the latter depends on the experience of truth (i.e., evidence). Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. David Carr (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 55. We may be able to rule certain propositions out solely in virtue of their form, but we are not actually concerned with their *truth* until we are concerned with evidence.

19. Laurence Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason: A Rationalist Account of* A Priori *Justification* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

20. Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason*, 110–20.

21. See, for example, Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason*, 2–6.

22. Devitt, for example, proposes a coherentist picture that he thinks avoids Bonjour's objections. Michael Devitt, "There Is No a Priori," in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, ed. Matthias Steup, John Turri, and Ernest Sosa (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 105–14.

23. For a fuller version of this argument, see, for example, Peter Boghossian, "Inference and Insight," review of *In Defense of Pure Reason*, by Laurence Bonjour, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, no. 3 (2001): 633–40.

24. Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason*, 106.

25. See, for example, Merleau-Ponty's claim that he is not attempting to reduce mathematical evidence to perceptual evidence (*PrW*, 123).

26. See the similar argument, in Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, Investigation VI, Part 2, "Sense and Understanding," in terms of categorical and sensuous intuition.

27. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 213.

28. For this distinction between formal and material a priori, see, for example, Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 29.

29. Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, 213–14.

30. A further consideration, which I will not explore in depth here, is that it is far from clear that we *could* have any evidence independently of experience. For what would our judgments be to us if we understood them but had no perceptual evidence for them? First, there would be no means by which to distinguish true from false individual judgments. Without experience, I could well judge that "the apple is green," and I could just as well judge, "The apple is red," but neither of these judgments could I fulfill or thereby determine as true. Perhaps my judgments would be constrained by the law of noncontradiction, but they would not thereby possess truth. Second, in the case of material universals, there would be no criterion by which to distinguish judgments with purely imaginative content from those with experiential content (i.e., one could not distinguish possible judgments from true ones). One can, for example, make as consistent universal judgments about unicorns as about horses. (Of course, there is a question here about whether there can be truths about fiction. I assume that, at least, we cannot have the same kind of knowledge about fiction that we can about the world.) More generally, this point can be made with respect to Husserl's distinction between assertive and merely contemplative universals (*Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, 293–94). If we intend a universal purely contemplatively, we suspend interest in its "'being' or 'non-being'" and consider only its "'*possibility* or impossibility'" (294). In contrast, if we intend a universal assertively, we *are* concerned with its being or non-being, and in this we depend on a reference to the universal being "confirmed or refuted by adequate future perception" (293). In other words, if we are concerned not merely with a universal's possibility, but with its truth, then we are referring not just to imagination, but to experience. Similarly, in the case of judgments, we can distinguish between contemplative and assertive judgments. If we make judgments assertively, if we affirm their truth, then we must be referring not merely to the imagination, but to experience, as the basis on which such judgments can be fulfilled. Without asserting this universal of an at least possible experience, it's far from clear that I could take it to be true at all.

31. Max Wertheimer, *Productive Thinking*, ed. Viktor Sarris (Cham: Birkhäuser, 2020), see chap. 1, "The Area of the Parallelogram."

32. This discussion of Bonjour's rationalism has allowed me to say something about the relevance of motivation to contemporary debates about a priori justification (i.e., intellectual *evidence*). There is also, of course, a debate between empiricism and nativism about the origin of our concepts (i.e., intellectual *meanings*). I will steer clear of this debate, since making a meaningful contribution to it would require a lengthy discussion of psychological research that I don't wish to engage in here. But note that Merleau-Ponty is, in general, critical of both empiricism and nativism. Cf., for example, *SB*, 170. Emerging alternatives to empiricism and nativist would appear much more sympathetic to Merleau-Ponty. For example, Carey's description, in her *Origin of Concepts*, of a process of "Quinian Bootstrapping" seems to me loosely aligned with my strategy of conceiving the development of intellectual meanings out of perceptual meanings in terms of motivation. Susan Carey, *The Origin of Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). I find this account sympathetic because, on the one hand, the output of Quinian Bootstrapping is not definable in terms of its input. But on the other, this output has a meaning only by leveraging the stock of meanings present in the input. And this, it seems to me, is very much the type of pattern I have been trying to describe in terms of motivation.

33. In chapter 2, I noted that motivation only disposes us to form judgments, and does not actually bring knowledge about. But I do think that motivation can directly bring about intellectual content and intellectual evidence. This is because having intellectual evidence or having an intellectual content is spontaneous—as we'll see in the following case studies, I spontaneously "see," for example, the need for Galileo's laws of motion when I consider perceptual givens in the appropriate manner—whereas judgment (and so knowledge) is active. There is no contradiction between these two points: I can have meanings and evidences *spontaneously*, but can judge of, or in accordance with, these only *actively*. The problem I am considering in this chapter is, more fundamentally than how we make a priori judgments, how we acquire the meanings and evidences that figure in these judgments.

34. It seems to me that Low's conception of an "empirical a priori" to be found in Merleau-Ponty risks mistaking this point, since it takes the a priori as something "directly drawn from experience." Douglas Low, "Merleau-Ponty and Transcendental Philosophy," *Philosophy Today* 57, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 281. Low conceives this direct drawing as follows: "A certain aspect of experience is given so routinely and regularly (all perception is spatial, for example) that it deserves to be called an empirical *a priori*; it deserves to be called a transcendental condition, a condition in whose absence experience simply would not take place" (281). But I have suggested a picture on which the a priori is not given in experience, since it transcends the latter.

35. Again, this does not mean that an item of knowledge can exist only for as long as its corresponding perception does. It is characteristic of knowledge to endure as a possession beyond the perception that evidences it. I know that my parents' sofa is blue even if I haven't seen it in months. However, I have this knowledge only because of the perception I at one point had; if this perception had not existed, the knowledge would not now exist. One might also object that it is possible to form a proposition without a correspondent perception (e.g., if, from the kitchen, I idly suppose the cat is in the living room). It is true, of course, that a proposition can *exist* without a corresponding perception existing. But the important point is that the proposition cannot have the *meaning* it has for me—here, that I have the proposition *as* something known—without the perceptual fulfillment. Further, it is undeniably true that I can have nonperceptual grounds to believe that the cat is in the living room, for example, if the cat has been in the living room every day at this time for the past year, or if I hear tell of the cat's whereabouts. But these reasons themselves suppose perceptual fulfillment: my previous perceptions of the cat in the living room, or my perception of the testimonial (or the other's perception on which their testimony is based). All these cases only defer the dependence of knowledge on perception through a mediating factor (memory, testimonial, etc.).

36. Paul Benacerraf, "Mathematical Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 70, no. 19 (November 1973): 661–79.

37. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 394.

38. Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, 394.

39. Marianne Wiser and Carol L. Smith, "How Is Conceptual Change Possible? Insights from Science Education," in *Core Knowledge and Conceptual Change*, ed. David Barner and Andrew Scott Baron (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29–52.

40. Marianne Wiser, Carol L. Smith, and Sue Doubler, "Learning Progressions as Tools for Curriculum Development: Lessons from the Inquiry Project," in *Learning Progressions in Science: Current Challenges and Future Directions*, ed. Alicia C. Alonzo and Amelia Wenk Gotwals (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012).

41. Wiser and Smith, "How Is Conceptual Change Possible?," 40–41.

42. See Susan Carey, *Origin of Concepts*; Carey, "The Making of an Abstract Concept: Natural Number," in *The Making of Human Concepts*, ed. Denis Mareschal, Paul C. Quinn, and Stephen E. G. Lea (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 265–94.

43. Stanislas Dehaene, *The Number Sense: How the Mind Creates Mathematics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 62–63.

44. Merleau-Ponty draws this example from Wertheimer (*PrW*, 119n; or *IP*, 55).

45. Wertheimer, *Productive Thinking*, 160–67.

46. See, for example, Leibniz, *New Essays*, bk. 2, chap. 9. There, Leibniz argues that the geometry of both the blind and the sighted person rest on the same "ideas," though of course they can't share the same "images." In answer to Molyneux's Question, Leibniz answers that a newly sighted person would be able to distinguish a sphere from a cube in virtue of trans-sensory features (e.g., that the cube has eight "distinguished points," whereas the sphere has none). For an exposition of Merleau-Ponty's thinking surrounding Molyneux's problem, see Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 67–74.

47. Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections* (New York: Picador, 2001), 267.

CHAPTER 5. PERCEPTUAL FAITH

1. See *PhP*, 274 for the phrase; or *PhP*, 311, 358–60, and 417 for related expressions and ideas; as well as *VI* (where the term is used most systematically), for example, 3, 28, and 50.

2. I have in mind Heidegger's distinction between phenomenon and semblance. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, trans. J. Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), §7a.

3. Neither is it propositional: in saying that perceptual faith is a "belief" in what we perceive, my claim is not that perceptual faith is a propositional attitude toward the world. Rather, it is something like a pre-predicative awareness of the reality of the perceived object (in the same way that perception gives its object as bearing a rich sense, but is not therefore a predication of various properties of its object).

4. There are, I think, considerable difficulties in characterizing the perceptual sense of existence exactly. Is "being" a content of the perception? Is it a quality of the act of perception? Is it rather presupposed in the perceived having contents at all? These are weighty questions, questions that would take us well into Heidegger's analyses, and questions that I won't delve into here. Suffice it to say that the *being* of the perceived figures, in some way, as part of the sense of my perception.

5. Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Boston, MA: Kluwer, 2001), 93.

6. Similarly, I think it is not quite right to distinguish, as Romdenh-Romluc does, between perceptual faith and a "power of summoning," which invests the perceptual

world with meanings correlate to a perceiver's bodily capacities and arranges "around ourselves a milieu of a definite structure" (*PhP*, 358). See Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, "Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination," *European Journal of Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (2009): 85. Merleau-Ponty seems to rule out such an interpretation, attributing the function of arranging a milieu to the very function that "places us in the world prior to every science and every verification through a sort of 'faith' or 'primordial opinion'" (*PhP*, 359). Indeed, he claims that this "originary opinion" is just that which "makes *something in general* appear" (*PhP*, 417).

7. However, note that at the same time, coherence *can* motivate the awareness of reality only in virtue of perceptual faith; coherence cannot simply explain the awareness of reality. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "The real is coherent and probable because it is real, and not real because it is coherent" (*VI*, 40). This is because appearances can be coherent for us only if we attribute them to one common something. If I did not think my appearances were of one common something, then their coherence would be a matter of mere coincidence for me. Thus, the awareness of reality is in fact the transcendental condition of their having coherence for me. This is not incompatible with claiming that appearance motivates the awareness of reality, however. The point is that appearance can tell us whether it is real only if we pose it the question: only through perceptual faith can appearance decide whether or not it merits this faith.

8. Aristotle, *De Anima III*, in *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001), 428a19–21.

9. Aristotle, *De Anima III*, 427b15–21.

10. See Merleau-Ponty's claim that in a phenomenological conception, which defines "being as what appears to us," "this skepticism and this dogmatism are simultaneously overcome" (*PhP*, 418–19).

11. See Peter Antich, "Merleau-Ponty on Hallucination and Perceptual Faith," *Phenomenological Studies* 4 (2020): 49–66. For more on Merleau-Ponty's account of hallucination, see Romdenh-Romluc, "Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination."

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, trans. Jonathan Webber (New York: Routledge, 2004), 168.

13. Similarly, in terms of nonhallucinatory illusions, he claims that illusions depend on a sort of structural vagueness or indeterminacy: "If I believe I see a large flat stone, which is in reality a patch of sunlight, far ahead on the ground in a sunken lane, I cannot say that I ever see the flat stone in the sense in which I will see the patch of sunlight while moving closer. The flat stone only appears, like everything that is far off, in a field whose structure is confused and where the connections are not yet clearly articulated. In this sense, the illusion, like the image, is not observable, that is, my body is not geared into it and I cannot spread it out before myself through some exploratory movements" (*PhP*, 310).

14. Sartre, *The Imaginary*, 167.

15. To be clear, then, there are differences of structure between the experience of perception and that of hallucination, but I need not be aware of these differences while I am experiencing a hallucination. This doesn't mean that the differences between perception and hallucination are external to those very experiences, however, because the differences belong to the implicit dimension of those experiences. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "I can live more things than I can represent to myself, my being is not reduced to what of myself explicitly appears to me. . . . The difference between illusion and perception is intrinsic, and the truth of perception can only be read in

perception itself" (*PhP*, 310). Thus, it is true that the hallucinating subject "suspects" (*PhP*, 359) the true world, even while turning away from it, but this suspicion need not be made explicit. And, admittedly, when presented with a perceived object, a hallucinating subject can distinguish it from her hallucination. But this does not mean she was always conscious of her hallucination as a hallucination, for the structural differences between the two are prethematic and can confront us immediately when the two are compared without being recognized for themselves.

16. For more on Merleau-Ponty's response to skepticism, see Marcus Sacrini, "Merleau-Ponty's Responses to Skepticism: A Critical Appraisal," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 21, no. 5 (2013): 713–34.

17. See, for example, sections 3 and 4 of Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); or John McDowell, "Knowledge and the Internal," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, no. 4 (December 1995): 890.

18. The same thing is essentially true if the new evidence occurs at a level above perception (e.g., I discount my perception on the basis of the testimony of others). Here the testimony of others amounts to a sort of disclosure of the world that supplants my perception, even if that testimony is not fulfilled in my own perception. Assuming my claim in chapter 4 that all evidence is ultimately perceptual, it follows that perceptual evidence is only ever displaced by perceptual evidence (or higher-order evidences motivated by it).

19. I have described Merleau-Ponty's response to skepticism simply in terms of perceptual faith. But it's worth noting that, as commentators have suggested, this response may be closely related to Merleau-Ponty's ontology as well. Dillon, for example, has argued that skepticism is undergirded by a dualist ontology of immanence and transcendence, which Merleau-Ponty's ontology attempts to overcome. Martin C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 35–37. Or Pietersma argues that Merleau-Ponty adopts a transcendental stance that rules out an external relation between perception and the perceived, thus undercutting skeptical concerns (*Phenomenological Epistemology*, 158–63). Leaving aside questions about how we should interpret Merleau-Ponty's ontology, we can note here again that the epistemological claims I find in Merleau-Ponty are underscored by his ontology. Again, I think it is legitimate to describe Merleau-Ponty's project in the epistemological terms I have used, without going too far into questions of ontology. But a certain ontological picture about the relation between appearance and reality is undeniably at play here, and I should acknowledge that to get a complete picture of Merleau-Ponty's view on these matters would require a related ontological investigation.

20. Cf. Antich, "Merleau-Ponty on Hallucination and Perceptual Faith," for more on why this response to skepticism does not amount to a justification of perceptual faith.

21. J. C. Berendzen, "Disjunctivism and Perceptual Knowledge in Merleau-Ponty and McDowell," *Res Philosophica* 91, no. 3 (July 2014): 283.

22. Rasmus T. Jensen, "Merleau-Ponty and McDowell on the Transparency of the Mind," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 21, no. 3 (2013): 470–92.

23. See, for example, A. David Smith, "Husserl and Externalism," *Synthese* 160, no. 3 (2008): 313–33; Lilian Alweiss, "Between Internalism and Externalism: Husserl's Account of Intentionality," *Inquiry* 52, no. 1 (2009): 53–78; Andrea Staiti, "On

Husserl's Alleged Cartesianism and Conjunctivism: A Critical Reply to Claude Romano," *Husserl Studies* 31, no. 2 (2014): 123–41.

24. Claude Romano, *At the Heart of Reason*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Claude Romano (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 317.

25. John McDowell, "The Disjunctive Conception of Experience as Material for a Transcendental Argument," in *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*, ed. Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 380–81.

26. Cf. John McDowell, "Tyler Burge on Disjunctivism," *Philosophical Explorations* 13, no. 3 (September 2010): 244.

27. McDowell, "Disjunctive Conception of Experience," 387.

28. McDowell, "Tyler Burge on Disjunctivism," 245–46.

29. See, for example, Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pt. 1, §6.

30. McDowell, "Disjunctive Conception of Experience," 387.

31. McDowell, "Knowledge and the Internal," 886.

32. Cf. McDowell, "Tyler Burge on Disjunctivism," 244.

33. To be clear, I don't take this point to be controversial. I think it's just a way of making the point Pritchard does in defining the Core Thesis of Epistemological Disjunctivism as: "In paradigm cases of perceptual knowledge an agent, S, has perceptual knowledge that ϕ in virtue of being in possession of rational support, R, for her belief that ϕ which is both *factive* (i.e., R's obtaining entails ϕ) and *reflectively accessible* to S" (*Epistemological Disjunctivism*, 13). That is, for Pritchard, the distinctive feature of epistemological disjunctivism is its insistence that an agent's reason for a belief can be both reflectively accessible and factive.

34. I have argued that McDowell's modified internalism underlies his response to skepticism. He claims, for example, that "the thing to do is not to answer the skeptic's challenges, but to diagnose their seeming urgency as deriving from a misguided interiorization of the space of reasons" ("Knowledge and the Internal," 890). But notice that modified internalism actually doesn't get McDowell the idea he needs for disjunctivism to interrupt the skeptical argument. What modified internalism really holds is that my warrant is not *independent* of facts about the world: namely, that *only* if p, then I can know that p. But this clearly does not entail that facts about the world suffice for knowledge: that if p, then I can know that p. As McDowell would acknowledge, I also have to be engaging in the appropriate sort of rational activity to be so warranted. And the question concerns what the standards of appropriate rational activity are. According to the skeptic, an appropriate standard for knowing that I perceive p is to know that I do *not* merely have an illusion of p. But since illusion can be introspectively indistinguishable from perception, I seem unable to do this. As we saw above, it was just this challenge that epistemological disjunctivism was supposed to meet. But now, at a deeper level, it seems that to do so, it has to simply assume that the skeptic's is not an appropriate standard of reasoning. But this obviously begs the question.

35. Cf. Jensen, "Merleau-Ponty and McDowell."

36. One might think I have misinterpreted McDowell's response to skepticism. After all, as I will soon consider, he does claim that "there is no need to establish, without begging questions against skepticism, that in any particular case of perceptual experience we actually are in the favourable epistemic position that skepticism suggests we could never be in" ("Disjunctive Conception of Experience," 379). What

this means is that McDowell does not take himself to secure, in the case of any given perceptual experience, that it is a knowledge-yielding perception. But this is different from the claim I am attributing to McDowell, namely, that for any case in which one is in fact having a perception, then one has knowledge. That is, we cannot establish that any particular perception is knowledge-yielding, but only that some particular perceptions are knowledge-yielding (or, at least, it is possible that some are). Thus, McDowell can also claim that if what is before me is a zebra, I can perceive a zebra and know that what I perceive is a zebra (even though, in another sense, I cannot know that this particular perceptual experience is in fact a perception).

37. One could object here that these quotes concern only *certainty* rather than *knowledge*. And the disjunctivist allows that we are fallible (or lack certainty) with respect to our ability to perceive and know particular facts about the world. So, while Merleau-Ponty does not allow for ontic *certainty*, couldn't he allow for ontic *knowledge*? The problem with this objection is that it has no basis in Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty never presents his position as securing ontic knowledge, and if we consider the matter carefully, we notice that he does not seem to distinguish between certainty and knowledge at all—the "Cogito" chapter treats the conclusions that we have no absolute knowledge (*PhP*, 418), and no certainty about perception (*PhP*, 393), more or less interchangeably.

38. Merleau-Ponty does think that our states of consciousness appear to us, but holds that the reality and the appearance of a particular state of consciousness need not be the same (e.g., I may be having an illusion and seem to myself to be having a perception). As he puts it, "In consciousness, appearance is not being, but phenomenon" (*PhP*, 308, 310)—in other words, the reality of mental states like perception is not fully transparent to consciousness, though neither is it fully opaque, since the former does appear or manifest itself to the latter.

39. I have just been attributing quite a high standard for knowledge to Merleau-Ponty, and a standard that might seem to be out of pace with the definition of knowledge I provided in chapter 2 (i.e., the "normatively motivated true judgment" definition). After all, it would seem implausible to claim that to be *motivated* by a perception to judge that *p*, one has to rule out that one is having an illusion. Merleau-Ponty does adopt quite a high standard for knowledge in the present context (in the "Cogito" chapter), because in this context he is in dialogue with a *justificational* view of knowledge. And part of his intent here is to argue that we never have *fully* justified beliefs. This, as we saw in chapter 4, is what it means to say that we have no "absolute" knowledge—knowledge that is fully certain because it is fully justified. So, his claim is that if we adopt a definition of knowledge as fully justified, then we cannot secure ourselves from the skeptic. But, as I understand it, the other side of this point is that we do not need to adopt this standard for knowledge, which is why he claims all our knowledge has motives. All our knowledge stands to varying degrees within the spaces of motivation and justification, and we should not adopt a conception of knowledge on which this fact rules out our having knowledge. As we saw in chapter 4, all we should rule out is our having absolute knowledge.

40. McDowell, "Disjunctive Conception of Experience," 379.

41. This is true of both more ordinary illusions (Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism*, 98) and radical skeptical scenarios (125–26).

42. Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism*, 87–89.

43. Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism*, 98; cf. 125–26.

CHAPTER 6. TRANSCENDENTAL JUSTIFICATION

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996). Hereafter cited in text and notes this chapter as *CPR*.

2. Merleau-Ponty himself clearly distinguishes his sense of the *a priori* from Kant's (*PhP*, 229–30). See Martin C. Dillon, "Apriority in Kant and Merleau-Ponty," *Kant-Studien* 78, no. 4 (1987): 403–23, for further discussion.

3. In what follows, I will generally leave aside Merleau-Ponty's own criticism of Kant, which, while interesting, can (in my view) obscure certain of the philosophical issues at hand. My intent here is only to provide a more acute understanding of Merleau-Ponty's own true commitments vis-à-vis Kant, which are not identical with (though neither, obviously, separate from) the totality of his explicit claims. For a good discussion of Merleau-Ponty's treatment of Kant, see Samantha Matherne, "Kantian Themes in Merleau-Ponty's Theory of Perception," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 98, no. 2 (2016): 207–11; for a markedly different take, see Tom Rockmore, *Kant and Phenomenology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), chap. 6. Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Kant tends to focus around the accusation that Kant intellectualizes perception, that is, he understands it in terms external to perception, the terms of the understanding. See Merleau-Ponty, *PhP*, lxxvii, 107, 131, 228, 315. The literature on Merleau-Ponty and Kant largely focuses on this accusation. See, for example, Eric Matthews, *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 31; Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge: Sensibility and Discursivity in the Transcendental Analytic of the "Critique of Pure Reason,"* trans. Charles T. Wolfe (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 204, 251, 395; Arthur Melnick, "Two Charges of Intellectualism against Kant," *Kantian Review* 18, no. 2 (2013): 197–219. In my view, were Kant describing perception, in Merleau-Ponty's sense, he would indeed be intellectualizing it. However, I will argue, Kant and Merleau-Ponty mean different things by "experience," and so I doubt that this accusation is fair.

4. Peter Antich, "Perceptual Experience in Kant and Merleau-Ponty," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 50, no. 3 (2019): 220–33.

5. Admittedly, Kant argues, experience does play a role in the formation of our a priori concepts, but only the role of an occasioning cause. As Kant puts it in the introduction to the B-edition, "Even though all our cognition starts **with** experience, that does not mean that all of it arises **from** experience" (*CPR*, B 1). Experience, according to Kant, is *temporally* our first cognition, for it is sensation that "arouses" the understanding. Nevertheless, this does not entail that all the content of our cognitions is derived from experience, because the understanding is a condition for the possibility of experience, and so any content added to experience by the understanding will be derived not from experience but from the understanding itself, experience merely serving to awaken this content.

6. In fact, I suspect it would be possible to conclude from this alone that Kant understands experience in terms of judgment, since Kant often indicates that cognitions can occur only in judgments. As Kant puts it in a note from 1783–84, "Insofar as we connect (separate) one concept with another in a judgment, then we think something about the object that is designated through a given concept, i.e., we cognize it by judging it. All cognition, hence also that of experience, accordingly consists of judgments; . . . Thus experience is possible only through judgments." Immanuel

Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer, and Frederick Rauscher (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 305. See also "All cognitions consist in judgments," from 1772–73 (*Notes and Fragments*, 151). I won't rely on this strategy, however, since much of the evidence for this claim is prior to the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

7. Cf. *CPR*, A 125. Note that some Kant commentators distinguish between two levels of experience in Kant. Allais, for example, distinguishes perception from empirical cognition. See Lucy Allais, "Kant, Non-Conceptual Content and the Representation of Space," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47, no. 3 (2009): 402. I tend to think that Kant does not draw such a distinction. Of course, he does distinguish between experience (*Erfahrung*) and perception (*Wahrnehmung*) (e.g., *Prolegomena*, §18), but in doing so he evidently understands perception as merely subjective, that is, as perception of a subject's state, not as the perception of an object. The question is whether he distinguishes between two kinds of experiences of objects. But even if he did draw such a distinction, I do not think it would be relevant for my present purpose, since his interest in the Deduction is with the conditions for the possibility of empirical cognition.

8. Cf. "What, then, do I mean by the question as to how the manifold may be combined in appearance itself (which, after all, is nothing in itself)? Here what lies in the successive apprehension is regarded as presentation; but the appearance that is given to me, despite being nothing more than a sum of these presentations, is regarded as their object, with which the concept that I obtain from the presentations of apprehension is to agree. We soon see that, since agreement of cognition with the object is truth, the question can only be inquiring after the formal conditions of empirical truth; and we see that appearance, as contrasted with the presentations of apprehension, can be presented as an object distinct from them only if it is subject to a rule that distinguishes it from any other apprehension and that makes necessary one kind of combination of the manifold. The [element] in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension is the object" (*CPR*, B 236).

9. In other words, I agree with Longuenesse's distinction between two senses of objectivity at play in Kant's discussion of the objective unity of apperception: a first, according to which a unity of apperception "conforms to an object" (i.e., forms a true representation); and a second, according to which a unity of apperception relates our representations to an object (i.e., forms a representation that tends to truth, or has truth-value, though it may be true or false) (*Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 82). If I think I am seeing a rock jutting up from the sand on the beach, but it turns out to be driftwood, my cognition was objective in the second sense (insofar as it was referred to the object), but not in the first (insofar as it did not present the object correctly). According to Longuenesse, it is this second sense of objectivity that the categories allow for. This seems right to me—Kant is aiming to explain how we can make empirical judgments, statements with objective purport, in the first place, and how there can be empirical truth at all.

10. Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, 289.

11. Cf. "The objective succession will consist in the order of the manifold of appearance whereby the apprehension of the one item (viz., what occurs) succeeds the apprehension of the other (viz., what precedes) *according to a rule*. This alone can entitle [*berechtigt*] me to say of the appearance itself, and not merely of my apprehension, that a succession is to be found in it" (*CPR*, B 238).

12. To be clear, when I talk about an objective temporal succession, I am talking about objectivity in the second sense proposed by Longuenesse: objective purport.

In the Second Analogy, Kant is not attempting to establish how we can guarantee the certainty of our judgments about time orders, but how we can make judgments about time order with objective purport at all. Here I would disagree with Guyer and others. See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), chap. 10. For discussion of the issue here, see Gregg Osborne, "Two Major Recent Approaches to Kant's Second Analogy," *Kant-Studien* 97, no. 4 (2006): 409–29; for a more detailed defense of the position I take, see Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 256–60.

13. Antich, "Perceptual Experience in Kant and Merleau-Ponty."

14. Again, part of what it means to say this recognition is spontaneous, is that even if I had good reason to reject it, I would not be able simply to revise it—just as the mere knowledge that what I am hearing is a familiar melody played backward does not suffice for me to hear it as such.

15. Chuck Close, "Agnosia," interview by Charlie Rose, PBS, January 20, 2012, https://charlierose.com/videos/14590.

16. One could, reasonably, have qualms about my application of the term "object" to Merleau-Ponty's description of perception, given that Merleau-Ponty calls experience "pre-objective" (e.g., *PhP*, 81). The structures of objectivity, properly speaking, pertain to the subjects of empirical judgments (i.e., that of which predications are made). These are not the same structures as those of the pre-objective things disclosed in perception. I continue to use the term "object" when discussing Merleau-Ponty's philosophy for the sake of facilitating a discussion between Merleau-Ponty and Kant. Nevertheless, "object" ought to be understood in a qualified sense in this context.

17. Karl Ameriks, "Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument," *Kant-Studien* 69, no. 3 (1978): 273–87.

18. Cf. Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 206–7.

19. For a response to this argument, see Ameriks, "Kant's Transcendental Deduction," 283–85.

20. One would need an argument more like Fichte's in the 1794 *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* to establish this conclusion. Johann G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (Leipzig: Gabler, 1794), ed. and trans. Peter Health and John Lachs as *The Science of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Kant does not make an effort to provide such an argument, and does not seem to identify a need for one in the *CPR*, which seems good reason to suspect that he does not mean to derive the categories from the synthetic unity of apperception without the mediation of knowledge of the actual form of experience.

21. Take Schulting's progressive interpretation, on which the claim "The category of 'cause-effect' pertains to the identity of discursive thought and hence is analytically derivable from it" follows from, "The subsisting 'I' is the original synthetic unity of apperception, which is that action which is the power of the self-active subject and spontaneously produces a synthetic unity among the manifold of representations." Dennis Schulting, *Kant's Deduction and Apperception: Explaining the Categories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 147. Schulting may be right that the concept of the I involves the concept of cause-effect, insofar as the concept of the I involves self-activity, and activity is a kind of causation. But the fact that activity is required to synthesize our representations does not mean that we need *a concept of* activity in

order to synthesize our representations. On the progressive interpretation, a category is deduced when it is shown to be a condition for the synthetic unity of apperception (as the condition for the analytic unity of apperception). But the fact that causality "pertains" to the I (i.e., that the I is a cause) does not mean that I need the category "causality" as a rule for synthesizing my appearances (i.e., does not show that the category "causality" is a condition for the synthetic unity of appearance).

22. The minor premise of a transcendental argument is a judgment, because it predicates of experience a certain characteristic (e.g., objective time order). But these judgments are not analytic, for nothing of the concept of experience as such entails time order (a being possessing intellectual intuition would have experience *not* characterized by time order).

23. I think the same argument works on a hybrid interpretation of the Transcendental Deduction like Schulting's, on which there is both a progressive and a regressive dimension of the Transcendental Deduction. On Schulting's interpretation, the Transcendental Deduction is not meant to "demonstrate the actuality of objective experience or knowledge" nor to convince the skeptic (*Kant's Deduction and Apperception*, 70, 73). Rather, objective experience or knowledge, as we generally believe ourselves to have, is assumed by Kant. On this interpretation, Kant's project and Merleau-Ponty's are orthogonal—Kant establishing the necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept of an object, and Merleau-Ponty establishing how we have actual knowledge and experience. As Schulting puts it, "There is no proof possible of the a priori applicability of categories to objects without a prior commitment to at least the actuality of objective knowledge of which the categories are the putative preconditions, which is shown by a regressive argument. Kant is not out to prove the *actuality* of objective knowledge. Hence, the premise of this argument is the actuality of objective knowledge" (212). But, insofar as Kant's project presupposes the actuality of objective knowledge, and Merleau-Ponty's project is to establish how such actual knowledge comes about, Kant's project presupposes a project like Merleau-Ponty's.

24. See chap. 4, n. 30.

25. This line of thinking both partially converges with that of Fink—insofar as both are concerned with the origin or the world-form—but also moves in another direction. Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in *Edmund Husserl: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, ed. Rudolf Bernet, Donn Welton, and Gina Zavota (New York: Routledge, 2005), 177–241. My critique has been epistemological, whereas Fink's is transcendental, holding that critical philosophy is mundane to the extent that it is concerned only with the connection between worldly beings and the world-form, whereas phenomenology is concerned with the origin of the world.

CHAPTER 7. METAPHYSICAL JUDGMENTS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996), B xiv. Hereafter cited in text and notes this chapter as *CPR*.

2. "All presentations, whether or not they have outer things as their objects, do yet in themselves, as determinations of the mind, belong to our inner state" (*CPR*, B 50).

3. Such an argument is common to both versions of the Deduction, though framed slightly differently in each. In the A-Deduction, Kant argues that concepts define a necessary synthesis of a manifold, and since any necessity must have a transcendental basis, there must be some transcendental basis for this necessary synthesis. This basis is transcendental apperception (*CPR*, A 106–7). Similarly, Kant opens the B-Deduction by arguing that experience depends on combination or synthesis of the manifold of intuition, that combination is the presentation of synthetic unity of the manifold—such that the presentation of *unity* is not produced through combination but is that which allows combination—and hence that the presentation of synthetic unity is a condition for experience (*CPR*, B 131). Transcendental apperception provides this presentation of unity, and hence is a condition for experience.

4. Note: It is unclear exactly what concept is analyzed to derive the unity of apperception. An alternate reading is given, for example, by Allison, who argues that it is the concept of discursive thinking. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 166. As just stated, I follow Longuenesse's view that it is the concept of "my presentation." Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge: Sensibility and Discursivity in the Transcendental Analytic of the "Critique of Pure Reason,"* trans. Charles T. Wolfe (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 67n13. But what is important, for my purposes, is not really what concept is here analyzed—only that the unity of apperception is also arrived at analytically.

5. David Hume, "Treatise on Human Nature," in *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2009), 517–32. For an argument for Kant's familiarity with Hume's critique of personal identity, see Patricia Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 97–100.

6. Hume, "Treatise on Human Nature," 526.

7. Hume, "Treatise on Human Nature," 529.

8. Merleau-Ponty develops his notion of a "tacit cogito" in the *Phenomenology of Perception* and, as is well known, later draws it into question in *The Visible and the Invisible*, writing, for example, that the tacit cogito is "impossible" (*VI*, 171). One might wonder, in this case, both whether it is legitimate to attribute this concept to Merleau-Ponty and whether the concept itself is sound. But there is a question about how strongly to take Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the tacit cogito. Some, like Vallier, take it strongly, suggesting it amounts to a "serious criticism" of Merleau-Ponty's earlier work. Robert Vallier, "Institution: The Significance of Merleau-Ponty's 1954 Course at the Collège de France," *Chiasmi International* 7 (2005): 285. Others, like Marratto, argue that Merleau-Ponty is not so much "overcoming" as "refining" his earlier notion of the self. Scott L. Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 172. It seems to me that we should not take Merleau-Ponty's claim that the tacit cogito is "impossible" too strongly. For he goes on to explain that the tacit cogito is "impossible" because something like a "cogito"—a thinking or reflecting consciousness—is possible only in virtue of speech, and so the idea of a tacit cogito is an oxymoron. Yet, later in the same passage, he explains that there are nevertheless nonlanguage (i.e., tacit) significations, which are not "positive," and exemplifies this as follows: "There is for example no absolute flux of singular *Erlebnisse*; there are fields and a field of fields, with a style and a typicality" (*VI*, 171). But this is exactly how he describes

the cohesion of the tacit cogito in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Indeed, in a later note, Merleau-Ponty returns to using the term "tacit cogito" approvingly (*VI*, 178–79). Admittedly, there may be problems with the idea of the tacit cogito as formulated in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, but in my view there is no wholesale rejection of the concept.

9. For the idea that one cannot think a meaning that one cannot express, see *PhP*, pt. 1, chap. 6.

10. Merleau-Ponty claims to disagree with Bergson on just this point, since the former's view, according to Merleau-Ponty, does run together distinct moments. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Instant C and instant D . . . are never indiscernible, for then there would be no time at all" (*PhP*, 444).

11. One way Merleau-Ponty makes this point is by describing the cohesion of the field of experience in terms of *institution* rather than *constitution*. He writes of this distinction that "to constitute in this sense is nearly the opposite of to institute: the instituted makes sense without me, the constituted makes sense only for me and for the 'me' of this instant" (*IP*, 8). In other words, constitution is active; in constitution, consciousness posits the being it apprehends. Institution, in contrast, is passive and does not depend on consciousness. Birth—in the sense of the inauguration of a new existence—is exemplary of institution: it is not an act and does not require consciousness. Yet with birth a new field of experience begins. Institution thus allows us to understand how we think of ourselves to be the same beings today that we were at age two, an age to which we can attach no consciousness through memory. We can do this because our identity is not actively constituted, but passively instituted.

12. Consider the argument Schechtman makes against Parfit's use of "quasi memories" in response to the circularity objection. Quasi memories are precisely such moments of the field of experience abstracted from that field, and it seems to me that Schechtman very compellingly demonstrates the sorts of violations of the sense of a memory involved in placing it within a different field of experience. See Marya Schechtman, "Personhood and Personal Identity," *Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 2 (February 1990): 71–92.

13. For a more detailed description of this process, see Peter Antich, "Narrative and the Phenomenology of Personal Identity in Merleau-Ponty," *Life Writing* 15, no. 3 (November 2018): 431–45.

14. I might also express the foundational relation here in the following terms. As Husserl puts it, "Anything built by activity necessarily presupposes, at the lowest level, a passivity that gives something beforehand." Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Norwell, MA: Kluwer, 1999), 78. What is the passive given upon which activity operates to identify personal existence? Suppose that the simplest form of the active operation of identification is this: I reflectively take I at $time_1$ and I at $time_2$, and recognizing these as the same I, I identify them. The passive given that enables this operation is that I at $time_1$ and I at $time_2$ are given as cohering with each other. Identification is just the active and explicit grasping of this implicit cohesion.

15. One might point out that there is no need for "I think" to work like a category, since what it cognizes is not an object, but the subject. Nor do we refer to the I in virtue of a set of properties it possesses. Longuenesse has made this point, writing, "Unlike the categories, . . . [the 'I think'] has no application rule or schema, because it is not the concept of an object. There is no feature we need to recognize in an object

in order to be in a position to apply the concept 'I.' We just learn to use 'I' to refer to ourselves insofar as, necessarily, in thinking we ascribe thinking to ourselves, the individual currently engages in the act of thinking, and are aware of thinking by perceiving the fact that we think." Béatrice Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine: Back to Kant and Back Again* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89. But, first, while we may not need to recognize any set of features in order to refer to the I, it does seem like a problem if the I referred to in virtue of empirical apperception and the I referred to in virtue of transcendental apperception possess *distinct* features. Second, this lack of shared features does seem to pose a problem in the context of Loguenesse's distinction between two kinds of reference to the "I." While I cannot explore this distinction in depth here, Longuenesse distinguishes between the uses of I as subject described by, for example, Wittgenstein and Evans, and the use of the I as subject defined by Kant (on which the former look like uses of the I as an object). The former are governed by Evans's Fundamental Rule of Reference, namely, that "I as a word or concept that refers, in any instance of its use, to the author of the thought or the speaker of the sentence in which 'I' is being used" (*I, Me, Mine*, 23). On the latter, "something counts as the referent of 'I' (= current thinker of the thought and speaker of the sentences 'I think the proof is valid,' 'I think this is a tree') precisely in virtue of being engaged in the activity that is predicated of it in the proposition 'I think p': the activity of thinking, premised on an activity of binding for thinking" (31). According to Longuenesse, the latter kind of reference cannot be derived from the former, nor is the former enough to understand how we use "I" (31n32). Thus, in contrast, she writes, "It is of course not the case that something counts as the referent of I (= current thinker of the thought 'I am sitting cross-legged') just in virtue of her sitting cross-legged" (31). Thus, according to Longueness, Kant discovers a special kind of reference in our uses of "I," one that follows a different rule of reference than our ordinary rule that applies to, for example, the self-ascription of psychological or corporeal states. But if these two uses of "I" require fundamentally different rules of reference, it becomes unclear how they are supposed to refer to the same thing. Of course, we can refer to the same entity using different rules of reference, but then we need some ground for supposing that the referents are the same, and this ground seems absent if we can't appeal to any shared set of features.

16. I see no problem in assimilating inner sense and the flow of consciousness to each other. Kant's "inner sense" is a faculty for intuiting the ever-shifting determinations of one's state (i.e., the flow of presentations through consciousness). What is disclosed in empirical apperception, then, are the contents of what Husserl calls the flow of consciousness. "Inner sense" and the "flow of consciousness" thus map onto each other, where inner sense is a faculty for intuiting the contents of the flow of consciousness. Note also that Husserl agrees with Kant that there is no permanent element in the flow of consciousness. He writes that "it pertains to the essence of the flow that no persistence can exist in it." Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Springer, 1991), 118 (hereafter cited in notes and in text this chapter as *PCIT*). Again, "As a matter of principle . . . no concrete part of the flow can make its appearance as nonflow. The flow is not a contingent flow, as an objective flow is. The change of its phases can never cease and turn into a continuance of phases always remaining the same" (118). All that remains constant, in terms of the flow, is its form: the continuous modification of contents in terms of retention.

17. This is, of course, also the direction in which Heidegger wished to push Kant. Heidegger's argument in §34 of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* is that Kant's own principles—what Kant is really striving after—commit him to a claim that he himself refuses to make, namely, that "the pure, finite self has, in itself, temporal character." Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 134. Or, as Heidegger also puts it, the pure self *is* time: "Time and the 'I think' no longer stand incompatibly and incomparably at odds; they are the same" (134). Whereas Heidegger criticizes Kant for not going far enough toward this account of the self, I take it that such an account of the self is not an intrinsic feature of Kant's project. My claim is not that the reflective account of the self is incorrect in its domain, only that it tacitly draws upon the pre-reflective experience of the self.

18. Note that there is a question about how much of the structure that I will describe (the self-constitution of the absolute flow of consciousness) is maintained in Husserl's later thinking about temporality, particularly in the C-Manuscripts. Kortooms has argued that the role of the ego in this late thinking displaces much of this structure. Toine Kortooms, *Phenomenology of Time: Edmund Husserl's Analysis of Time-Consciousness* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002). I find the responses forwarded by Brough and Mensch compelling, but in any case I am interested here only in the portion of Husserl's thinking on which Merleau-Ponty draws. John B. Brough, "Some Reflections on Time and the Ego in Husserl's Late Texts on Time-Consciousness," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 89–108; James R. Mensch, *Husserl's Account of Our Consciousness of Time* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2010).

19. There is some controversy about how exactly Husserl means to carve up these three levels, namely, whether the second and third levels can be distinguished as intentional object and intentional act in pre-reflective experience, or whether the third level just names the pre-reflective self-awareness of the second level. For an overview of this debate, see Dan Zahavi, "Objects and Levels: Reflections on the Relation between Time-Consciousness and Self-Consciousness," *Husserl Studies* 27 (2011): 13–25. My position is meant to be acceptable to either side of the debate.

20. Cf. "The phases of the flow of consciousness in which phases of the same flow of consciousness become constituted phenomenally cannot be identical with these constituted phases, nor are they. What is brought to appearance in the actual momentary phase of the flow of consciousness—specifically, in its series of retentional moments—are the past phases of the flow of consciousness." Husserl, *PCIT*, 88.

21. Note that Brough has claimed that this passage (dating from 1907) provides an inadequate account of the relation between absolute consciousness and the experiencing of immanent objects, a relation that is more fully worked out in later passages we have been considering. John B. Brough, "The Emergence of an Absolute Consciousness in Husserl's Early Writings on Time-Consciousness," *Man and World* 5, no. 3 (1972): 309. We might have concerns about this passage, but at least I do not think Husserl gives up the distinction between objectivating and objectivated in later passages, insofar as he maintains that the coincidence between the two does not amount to an identity.

22. For more on Merleau-Ponty's account of the relation between subjectivity and temporality, see Michael R. Kelly, "The Subject as Time: Merleau-Ponty's Transition from Phenomenology to Ontology," in *Time, Memory, Institution: Merleau-Ponty's New Ontology of Self*, ed. David Morris and Kym Maclaren (Athens: Ohio University

Press, 2015), 199–216. Kelly reads Merleau-Ponty, in the "Temporality" chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception*, as breaking from a Husserlian phenomenological model, on which basically time is constituted in the subject, for a Heideggerean ontological model, on which the self is constituted by temporality. For my project here, I don't wish to draw any sharp distinction between Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's thinking—nor am I sure that such a distinction (time as constituted by the subject, or the subject as constituted by time) is possible at the ultimate level of phenomenological analysis. For, on the whole, it seems to me that Merleau-Ponty's picture agrees with Husserl's: Whereas at the level of reflective judgment, Kant describes the determinative as that within which there is time, at the level of pre-reflective experience, Merleau-Ponty describes the determinative as the flow of time itself. The pre-reflective subject is "determinative" with respect to the flow of time, because it undertakes the passive synthesis of the temporal flow. As determinative, the pre-reflective subject is not itself properly something in time. It is not temporal, then, in the sense of having a place within a chronology, but in the sense of being that which undertakes time. Merleau-Ponty writes, "Ultimate subjectivity is not temporal in the empirical sense of the word; if the consciousness of time was built from successive states of consciousness, then a new consciousness would be necessary for the awareness of this succession, and so on. . . . We can say that ultimate consciousness is 'timeless,' in the sense that it is not intra-temporal. . . . Subjectivity is not in time because it takes up or lives time and merges with the cohesion of a life" (*PhP*, 446). In other words, the move to the pre-reflective level does not make the determinative and the determined indistinguishable. However, the relation of this distinction to time is redescribed, such that the determinative at this level is not that within which there is time, but is the movement of time.

23. Here I am referring to Merleau-Ponty's concept of reversibility, central to *The Visible and the Invisible*. Merleau-Ponty likely borrows this term from Gestalt psychology, in which reversible images are those that admit of two contradictory interpretations. For example, our perception of the Rubin vase (see fig. 1.2) is multistable or reversible, because the same image can be seen as either a vase or two opposed faces—depending on what is perceived as figure and what as ground—but not as both at the same time. The curious thing about such cases is that the same image can motivate two different meanings. Similarly, according to Merleau-Ponty, reversibility is a basic characteristic of the body, insofar as it can be apprehended either as subject or as object but never as both at the same time (e.g., if my right hand is touching something, and I touch my right hand with my left, I will never touch the right hand as *touching*, but only as touched).

24. Recall, my purpose has never been to delegitimize justification as a project, only to show that all justificatory relations are grounded in relations of motivation (see the end of chapter 2).

25. Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. George di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 122.

26. Cf. Sebastian Gardner, "Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception," in *The Transcendental Turn*, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 312–18.

27. We could think here about Hegel's claim that the form of judgment is essentially inadequate to speculative truth, for judgments are always one-sided: every judgment is only a *moment* of the self-moving unity of speculative thinking but risks taking on the appearance of fixity in abstraction from the movement of which it is

a moment. As Hegel puts it, "Judgment joins subject and object in a connection of identity; abstraction is therefore made from the fact that the subject has yet more determinacies than the predicate has, just as that the predicate is wider than the subject. Now, if the content is speculative, the non-identity of subject and predicate is also an essential moment; but this is not expressed in judgment. . . . For the purpose of expressing the speculative truth, the defect is first remedied by adding the contrary proposition. . . . But another defect then crops up, for these propositions are disconnected and therefore present their content only in an antinomy, whereas the content refers to one and the same thing, and the determinations expressed in the two propositions should be united absolutely—in a union which can then only be said to be an unrest of simultaneous incompatibles, a movement" (*Science of Logic*, 67).

CONCLUSION

1. See Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 143–45, 217–19.

2. Martin C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), xviii; see also the conclusion, "Abyss and Logos," pp. 224–44.

3. One might interpret in these terms Aristotle's argument that it would be absurd to attribute the virtues of character to the gods (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1178b); or Augustine's that it is precisely our kinds of virtues that bar us, in this life, from the highest good. In Aristotle, *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001). Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), bk. XIX, chap. 4.

4. See also Susan Bredlau, *The Other in Perception: A Phenomenological Account of Our Experience of Other Persons* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), chap. 4.

5. For more on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of heroism, see Bryan A. Smyth, *Merleau-Ponty's Existential Phenomenology and the Realization of Philosophy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

6. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Open Road, 2015), 24.

7. Johann G. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987), 71; Susan R. *Wolf*, "The Importance of Love," in *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 191–95.

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