I want to thank my critics not only for their attention to my book but also for their hospitality in Valencia, where they first presented me with their stimulating and wide-ranging objections.\(^1\) These objections fall naturally into three groups. The first group consists of objections that concern the overall project of *Empiricism and Experience* (henceforth: *E&E*): what that project is, and what burdens it entails. The objections raised by José Martínez and by Jordi Valor fall in this group, and I shall address them first (section 1). The second group consists of objections to some specific elements in my execution of the project. The objections of Valeriano Iranzo and of Tobies Grimaltos and Carlos Moya fall in this group, and I shall address them in sections 2 and 3 respectively. In the final group falls the objection offered by Josep Corbí, who argues that I cannot provide an answer to a certain question he raises about experience. I shall offer resistance to Corbí’s argument in section 4.

### 1. The Project of *Empiricism and Experience*: Martínez and Valor

The project of *E&E* is, in general terms, to offer an account of the rational contribution of experience to our knowledge.\(^2\) More particularly, it is to offer an account that preserves what I take to be the central claim of empiricism, namely, that in our quest to understand the self and the

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\(^1\) I am particularly grateful to José Martínez, who organized the workshop on *Empiricism and Experience* at the University of Valencia in June 2006 and who helped my family and me in innumerable ways during our visit to Spain.

\(^2\) I assume familiarity with the main ideas of *E&E*. Martínez and Valor provide, in their essays, helpful abstracts of these ideas. For a more extended summary, see my “Experience and Knowledge.”
world, experience is our principal epistemic authority and guide. (I called this claim the *Insight of Empiricism.*) Martínez and Valor think that this project requires me to provide a certain kind of argument that I do not, and perhaps cannot, provide. Thus, Martínez says that I must show, at least in certain ideal cases, that “the revision process is perfectly convergent to the truth.”\(^3\) Valor also thinks I am subject to a similar demand, and furthermore, that I cannot meet it—or at least, that I cannot meet it to the satisfaction of the skeptic. He writes, “Gupta’s theory is not powerful enough to sanction that *only one* of [the] views is epistemically acceptable: the *true* one.”\(^4\) Martínez argues for the demand on the basis of a link that he thinks obtains between rationality and truth. Valor offers his argument in the guise of the skeptic, and I will address it first.

Valor’s skeptic demands a justification for the *Insight of Empiricism*, for the normativity of the given, and even for *modus ponens*. And the skeptic observes—undoubtedly to his own delight—that no noncircular justification is forthcoming in any of these cases. Had the skeptic asked for a justification for an ordinary claim such as “men exist,” or for an ordinary perceptual judgment (e.g., “that’s a book”), he would have found the situation to be similar. Again, no noncircular justification would be forthcoming. None of this perturbs me, however, in the least. The project of *E&E* is not to deprive the skeptic of his small delights. I can grant the skeptic that no noncircular justification is forthcoming in the cases he cites, but I want to insist that the absence of such justification does not mean an absence of rationality. A subject may be perfectly rational in, for example, her ordinary perceptual judgments even though no noncircular justifications for the judgments are available to her. Demands for justification are not always legitimate, and we should pay no heed to the skeptic’s bald and unmotivated demands.

Nevertheless, there is a skeptical challenge that deserves serious consideration. This challenge is found in the complex of arguments offered by the ancient skeptics;\(^5\) it is found also, in

\(3\)Martínez, “On the Reliability of Experience and the Norm of Revision,” §4. Iranzo, too, endorses a similar demand. He thinks that I need to provide an “epistemological argument . . . that, in ordinary circumstances, experience effectively leads to convergence among views and to eliminate falsity from them” ( “On the Epistemic Authority of Experience,” §3).


\(5\)See, Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*. 
modern form, in Hume. The challenge begins with a plausible account of the contributions of experience and reason to our knowledge, and it concludes with the observation that our ordinary claims far outstrip these contributions. That is, the skeptic argues that we cannot know what we claim to know, because experience and reason do not supply us with the requisite materials: our knowledge claims are like those of a delusional man who claims to have built a house for himself when he never had the needed brick, board, and mortar. A particular instance of this kind of skeptical argument is as follows: experience acquaints us only with our present subjective sense-data, reason informs us only of conceptual connections, and these materials are logically insufficient to entitle us to our ordinary claims of knowledge.

I argued in *E&E* that this kind of skeptical challenge is powerful, that it is not based on a simple error or fallacy. I found the crucial step in the skeptic’s argument to be purely logical, namely, that the rational contribution of experience is propositional in form. Once this logical step is granted, Cartesian conceptions of experience become inevitable, and one can escape the skeptical conclusion only by taking refuge in idealism. For the details of the argument, see *E&E*, chapter 2.

Note the differences between the two sorts of skeptics: Valor’s skeptic and, what we may call, the *Humean* skeptic. Valor’s skeptic makes bald demands for justification, regardless of the legitimacy of these demands. The Humean skeptic makes no such demands; she offers a specific argument, based on plausible premisses, that leads to a skeptical conclusion. Another difference between the two skeptics is that they proceed at different levels. Valor’s skeptic debates with us, and he thinks he can embarrass us through his demands for justification. The Humean skeptic is at a higher level: she is concerned with the structure of reasons and, in particular, with how experience provides us with reasons for belief. Humean skepticism, though higher, is the more fundamental of the two. It can vindicate Valor’s skeptic, for it can render legitimate many of his demands for justification, including demands for the justification of ordinary judgments of perception. Valor’s skeptic cannot in the same way help the Humean skeptic, for his starting point (i.e., his bald demand for justification) is not similarly plausible.

One of my principal aims in *E&E* was to offer a way of countering Humean skepticism. I argued that the rational contribution of experience is not propositional in form; it is instead hypothetical. Experience does not, by itself, entitle us to any propositions; it does so only in
Let me say something about the argument Valor offers near the end of his paper. This argument is not clear to me because the view on which the argument turns—namely, that of the Non Cartesian Solipsist (NCS)—is not specified in requisite detail. If the NCS view is rigid, then it is not epistemically symmetrical to the view of the externalist (who, I will assume for concreteness, accepts the commonsense view). The externalist view is not rigid at all: an extraordinary course of experience may force the externalist to abandon even his central tenet, that there are mind-independent objects. On the other hand, if the NCS view is non-rigid, then one wants to know what experiences prompt it to acknowledge objects as mind-independent. One also wants to know why the view cannot converge, as Valor states that it cannot, to the externalist view.

Perhaps Valor’s aim in the present argument is to show that a failure of convergence is inevitable. If so, let me draw attention to my exchange with Ram Neta, where this issue is addressed. See Neta’s “Empiricism about Experience” and my “Equivalence, Reliability, and Convergence,” §III.
Martínez writes, “If we can say that a brain-in-a-vat is rational, it is because we have reasons to believe that, if she were not a brain-in-a-vat and would promote convergence (in ideal conditions) she would achieve truth (§4).” I have doubts here about the connection claimed by the word ‘because’, for I see no reason to believe the claim about convergence and truth other than that the claim is definitional of “ideal conditions.”

The example of the brain-in-a-vat establishes an important independence of empirical rationality from truth. A subject may follow the dictates of empirical rationality to the ideal limit and yet may remain far from the truth. The brain-in-a-vat may be perfectly rational in her empirical enquiries, but she persists with a fundamentally erroneous view of the world. So, it cannot be a demand on an account of empirical rationality that it show that the dictates of rationality must lead to truth, for they do not always do so. One can modify the demand by invoking ideal conditions: the dictates of rationality lead to the truth in certain ideal conditions. But this provides a substantive demand on accounts of empirical rationality only if we have an independent characterization of “ideal conditions,” which plainly we do not. It is rather the modified demand that spells out “ideal conditions”: ideal conditions are those in which dictates of rationality, if pursued to the limit, lead to truth. The demand thus reduces to that of sustaining a mere tautology; it is not substantive.

The issues about rationality and truth, raised by Martínez and Valor, are important and difficult, and can be fully addressed only in a more extended treatment than I can give them here. Let me confine myself, for now, to clarifying the relationship of these issues to the project of E&E.

The project of E&E, I have noted, is not to justify the Insight of Empiricism to the satisfaction of a determined skeptic. This skeptic concedes nothing, and nothing can be justified if nothing is allowed as ground. This kind of skepticism is vapid, and the project of responding to it, quixotic.

The project of E&E is not to provide answers to questions such as “Why must I form my beliefs in a certain way?”

Martínez writes, “If we can say that a brain-in-a-vat is rational, it is because we have reasons to believe that, if she were not a brain-in-a-vat and would promote convergence (in ideal conditions) she would achieve truth (§4).” I have doubts here about the connection claimed by the word ‘because’, for I see no reason to believe the claim about convergence and truth other than that the claim is definitional of “ideal conditions.”

The idea that the brain-in-a-vat is rational is rooted, I believe, in the thought that rationality supervenes on the subjective character of experiences and on epistemic resources available to the subject. The brain-in-a-vat is rational because the person on whom she is modeled is rational and, from the subjective point of view, the epistemic lives of the two are the same.
beliefs by rational methods?” and “Why must I be guided by experience in my beliefs?” These highly general questions are, if not quixotic, in a close neighborhood of quixotic questions. We can ask of some specific methods \( M \) of forming beliefs about a subject \( S \), “Why is it rational to use \( M \) to form beliefs about \( S \)?” For instance, we can ask “Why is it rational to use triangulation to measure heights of mountain peaks?” This makes sense, for we have an independent method of determining heights of mountain peaks, and we can provide a “soundness proof” that the results of triangulation are likely to agree with the facts. Once the question is generalized, however, to the totality of all rational methods no such “soundness proof” is possible. Obviously, we can have no method of determining how things are that is independent of the totality of all our rational methods.

Questions that make sense locally do not necessarily make sense when they are generalized. We can ask, “What caused the fire?”—answer: the short circuit. We can go on to ask, “What caused the short circuit?”—answer: the defective stove. And we can persist with this line of questions. All this makes perfect sense. But the generalized question, “What caused all that there is?”, is different; it has no clear sense. Similarly, it makes sense to ask of certain particular methods \( M \), why we should be guided by them in forming our beliefs (e.g., about the heights of mountain peaks). And it makes sense to answer such questions by saying, “Because \( M \) leads to truth.” But when the question is generalized to ask about the totality of all rational methods, “Why should we be guided by them?”, it ceases to have a clear sense. It invites the answer, “Because rational methods lead to truth”; but the generalized question is not parallel to the specific questions, and the attempt to answer it on the model of the specific questions is a failure.

If one commits oneself to the rationality of a proposition, say \( P \), then one commits oneself to accepting \( P \) and thus to accepting “\( P \) is true.” And conversely: if one commits oneself to accepting “\( P \) is true,” then one commits oneself to the rationality of one’s acceptance and thus to the rationality of \( P \). These are obvious and trivial relationships between rationality and truth. These facts should not fool us into thinking that we can answer the general question, “Why form beliefs by rational methods?”, with the claim, “Rational methods lead to truth.” If the claim records merely the trivial observations of the sort just mentioned, it provides no answer to the general question. Otherwise, the claim is at best tautological; at worst, it is false.

The project of \( E&E \) is, then, neither to answer the determined skeptic nor to provide a
general vindication of rationality and experience. Instead, the project is to make sense of empirical rationality in light of specific threats it faces. The threats are posed by what I called in the book “the Multiple-Factorizability of Experience” and by the closely related Humean skepticism. Both Multiple-Factorizability and Humean skepticism make it appear that the rational force of experience is highly limited, and thus that even our ordinary beliefs about ordinary objects fail to be rational. These challenges threaten the Insight of Empiricism. Indeed, in the seventeenth century, some philosophers based an extreme fideism on something akin to Humean skepticism: if experience is too weak to render rational even ordinary beliefs then we must recognize, they argued, an epistemic authority more powerful than experience. My aim in E&E was to offer a way of thinking about the rational role of experience that meets the challenges posed by Multiple-Factorizability and by Humean skepticism, and to thereby protect the Insight of Empiricism.

The account offered in E&E should be measured not by whether it provides a “soundness proof” for empirical rationality in general, but by how effectively it meets such challenges as Humean skepticism and by how well it makes sense of our rational practices. Let me draw attention in closing to two features of the account offered in E&E. First, it vindicates the natural idea that the rationality of an ordinary perceptual judgment does not require the availability of a noncircular justification, a derivation of it from more fundamental judgments (e.g., about sense-data). That is, in rational empirical debate, a participant loses no credibility if she is unable to provide noncircular justifications for her ordinary perceptual judgments. If credibility is lost, it is lost only by the participant who presses the demand for justification. He is the one who, seduced by skeptical arguments, misconceives the logic of empirical inquiry. Second, according to the account, it is not a demand of empirical rationality that refutations be available for competing views, refutations that would be recognized as such by the competing views themselves. In rational empirical debate, a participant loses no credibility if she is unable to refute, say, solipsism to the satisfaction of the solipsist (alternatively: if she is unable to bring about convergence with solipsism). The attempt to impose such a burden rests also on a misconception about the logic of

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8I stated at the outset (E&E, chapter 1) that my goal in the book was to reconcile two fundamental ideas, the Insight of Empiricism and the Multiple-Factorizability of Experience.

9Note that competing accounts of empirical rationality—foundationalism and coherence theories—are no better placed to provide such a “soundness proof.”
empirical inquiry. Indeed, the misconceptions underlying the two demands, the demand for a justification of perceptual judgments and the demand for a refutation of solipsism, are at root identical. Both demands arise out of the idea that the rational contribution of experience is propositional in form, an idea for whose rejection I argued at length in _E&E_.

2. Admissible Views: Iranzo

Iranzo holds that the model of empirical rationality I offer does not sustain empiricism. He argues that the restriction of revision processes to admissible views undermines my defense of empiricism, and this for two opposite reasons. First, the model I offer assigns, Iranzo thinks, a more substantial role to reason than I am willing to acknowledge. For, according to Iranzo, the model requires reason to have some _a priori_ grasp of the world and the self: “The ‘revision and convergence’ picture violates the Insight [of Empiricism].” Second, despite the violation, Iranzo thinks, the picture presupposes this same Insight. More specifically, in ruling non-receptive views as inadmissible, Iranzo thinks, I tacitly assume the Insight. Iranzo’s complaint is, in short, that my argument assumes the very thesis to be established and delivers not the thesis itself but one of its contraries. Neither part of the complaint, I shall argue, has merit.

The general “revision-and-convergence picture” is neutral, it should be observed, on the debate between the empiricists and the rationalists (see _E&E_, pp. 158–60). Both parties can accept the general picture; their disagreement centers on requirements of admissibility. Rationalists will argue that we know _a priori_ some substantive truths about the world; that these truths constrain admissibility; and that without this additional constraint, we cannot make sense of empirical rationality. Empiricists, on the other hand, will deny that we have any _a priori_ insight into the nature of the world. They will insist that all admissibility constraints must be grounded solely in

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10 Iranzo also raises, *en passant*, skeptical concerns about convergence and truth. His principal objections, however, concern admissibility and empiricism; and it is these that will be my focus in the present section. My response to Martínez and Valor addresses, I believe, the skeptical worries expressed by Iranzo.

epistemological considerations (such as those motivating non-rigidity).

One of the admissibility constraints I offered was that of receptivity: admissible views must not be insensitive to subjective differences between experiences; they must not yield the same perceptual judgments when experiences are subjectively distinct. A view that yields the sole judgment “Something red exists,” irrespective of the subjective character of experience, fails to be receptive and, I suggested, is inadmissible. Iranzo claims that by putting this restriction I am assuming the very thing I am defending, the Insight of Empiricism. But Iranzo’s claim is untrue, as can be seen as follows. If the claim were true, then it would be incoherent to deny the Insight while accepting receptivity as a constraint on admissibility. But there is a perfectly coherent rationalist position that does so. According to this position, the basic and most essential facts about the self and the world (e.g., that the self is non-physical and that space is Euclidean) are knowable a priori, and the role of experience is merely to inform us about certain fleeting, subjective states of our selves. Such a position accepts receptivity—subjective differences are epistemically significant—but it entails a thorough denial of the Insight.

The most that receptivity says is that subjective differences make a difference in the rational force of experiences. This is so far from the Insight that rationalists should have little difficulty accepting it.

Iranzo thinks that by putting non-rigidity as a requirement on admissible views I violate the Insight. The requirement of non-rigidity implies that solipsism, for example, is inadmissible. But this means, Iranzo thinks, “that solipsism has no chance to reappear through a revision process in the light of experience precisely because solipsism is blind to experience (§3).” So, Iranzo concludes, solipsism is entirely excluded from the revision process. Hence, he thinks, the Insight is violated because we now “attribute to reason some grasp of the nature of the world and the self (§3).” I want to make two observations in response to this argument.

First, Iranzo provides no good reasons for thinking that solipsism cannot appear in later stages of revision. The claim “Solipsism is blind to experience,” in the sense relevant to rigidity, does not imply the claim “Solipsism cannot appear in the revision process.” The two claims are about very different things. The first claim is about the rational evolution of solipsism. The second claim is about the rational evolution of admissible views, views that are not solipsistic. The revision behavior of solipsism does not entitle one to draw conclusions about the revision
behavior of an entirely different class of views. There is a gap here that needs to be bridged, and Iranzo supplies no legitimate way of bridging it. Observe that we cannot bridge the gap by claiming, for instance, that a non-rigid view cannot evolve into solipsism, for this claim is simply false.\textsuperscript{12}

Second, even if Iranzo’s argument for the exclusion of solipsism from revision processes were sound, it would not follow that empiricist doctrines are violated. For instance, it would not follow that reason has insight into the self and the world, that it can discover \textit{a priori} that solipsism is false. All that would follow is that reason supplies us with an \textit{a priori} entitlement to reject solipsism: solipsism remains coherent and possible, but we now would have epistemic reasons to reject it \textit{a priori}. Note, too, that these reasons would be fundamentally tied to the authority of experience. It is to enable experience to speak with a clear and full voice that rigid views are ruled inadmissible. A further argument (which, contrary to fact, we are imagining is available) turns this interim conclusion to an entitlement to reject solipsism outright. The reason to reject solipsism remains grounded in experience and its epistemic authority. Under the scenario we are imagining, we might need to fine tune the letter of the Insight of Empiricism, but its spirit remains intact.

3. Absolute and Effective Contents: Grimaltos and Moya

It is an important feature of the empiricism I defend that it enables us to make sense of the following possibility: even though we begin empirical inquiry with a highly erroneous conception of the world and the self, experience guides us to a better, more accurate conception of both. The original, flawed conception may infect our perceptual judgments with error. Still, these judgments can have the power to guide us to the truth about reality. To understand empirical knowledge we do not need to see it as founded on error-free perceptual judgments and pristine, flawless conceptions.

One distinction I used to make sense of the possibility just sketched is that between

\textsuperscript{12}For a counterexample, see Neta’s “Empiricism about Experience”; see also my reply to Neta, “Equivalence, Reliability, and Convergence,” §III.
absolute and effective contents. To illustrate the distinction, imagine an ancient astronomer who examines the patterns of the stars some fine evening and issues the judgment “The Sun is in Capricorn today.” The astronomer’s judgment cannot be ruled true, for it implicates an erroneous conception of being in a constellation. Yet the judgment may, in the ancient community, serve as an effective guide to action and cognition, for it correctly indicates the Sun’s position relative to the Earth. I captured this double aspect of the judgment by associating with it two contents, one absolute and the other effective. The absolute content of the astronomer’s judgment captures the conceptual connections of the judgment with other judgments, and it is false. The effective content is disengaged from some of these connections. It helps explain how the judgment does epistemic and practical work in the ancient community, and I claimed that it is true.

Grimaltos and Moya argue that the distinction I draw between the two kinds of content has unwelcome consequences, and that I am better off without it. Their argument consists of two connected points. First, according to my account, they claim, “virtually any assertion made by anyone is bound to have a false absolute content.” Second, they hold that the distinction can be dispensed with if we accept a less holistic conception of content and if we pay attention to certain pragmatic aspects of discourse. Neither of these points will be seen to be correct, I shall argue, once the distinction between absolute and effective contents is properly marked.

Consider the account Grimaltos and Moya give of the example about Fred and Mary. In this example, Fred sees Mary with a man who is being very kind to her. Fred mistakes this man to be Mary’s husband and says, pointing to Mary, “Her husband is kind to her,” whereas as a matter of fact, Mary’s husband is not kind to her at all. Grimaltos and Moya imagine that Fred arrives at his judgment through the following sequence of thoughts:

(A) This man is kind to her.
(B) This man is her husband; so,
(C) Her husband is kind to her.

Grimaltos and Moya claim that (C) must be a part of the absolute content of (A) because the

inference from (A) to (C) is “licensed for Fred by his belief” (B);\(^\text{14}\) hence, they go on to conclude, the absolute content of (A) must be false. If this reasoning were sound then, as they say, the absolute content of virtually all assertions would be false (since any false belief would render the absolute content of any assertion false). Furthermore, the notion of absolute content would be useless and dispensable.

The error in the above argument is obvious: that (C) can validly be deduced from (A) via some of Fred’s beliefs does not imply that the absolute content of Fred’s thought (A) includes that of (C). Absolute content, as I explained it, is “simply the old and familiar content under a new name.”\(^\text{15}\) How this content is to be demarcated is, of course, much debated in current philosophy, but under no proposal worthy of any consideration is the content demarcated in the way supposed by Grimaltos and Moya. Absolute content is not closed under inference in general. The most we can say is that it is closed under inferences that rely solely on conceptual truths. The inference from (A) to (C) rests on (B), and on no account is (B) a conceptual truth. The absolute content of (A), as I understand it, does not include that of (C). Grimaltos and Moya are refuting a notion that is not mine.\(^\text{16}\)

The above reply secures, if successful, the easy half of the absolute/effective distinction. What about the other half? Is “effective content” a useful notion? Grimaltos and Moya argue that the work I delegate to effective content is best accomplished by other, more familiar ideas. Thus they argue that in Joseph Camp’s ant example, the notion of effective content can be dispensed with in favor of pragmatic ideas such as “speaker’s reference.” In the astronomical example, what I see as the effective content of the ancient astronomer’s assertion, Grimaltos and Moya see as its ordinary and familiar content. If such moves were in general available, then I would agree with Grimaltos and Moya that the notion of effective content should be dispensed with. For I accept

\(^{14}\text{Op. cit., p. zzz.}\)

\(^{15}\text{“Meaning and Misconceptions,” p. 30.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Observe also that, on Grimaltos and Moya’s understanding of it, the absolute content is liable to vary from context to context even for sentences such as “7 + 5 = 12”, since the beliefs of the speakers are liable to vary from context to context. This, too, shows that the notion I endorsed is not the one that Grimaltos and Moya are refuting (see E&E, p. 141).}\)
Before I address Grimaltos and Moya’s remarks on the ant and the astronomical examples, let me clarify a little the notion of effective content. I introduced this notion to make sense of conceptual practices in which assertions with erroneous absolute contents perform useful cognitive and practical work. Of course, many effective conceptual practices consist of assertions with true absolute contents; here we have no need to distinguish absolute and effective contents, for it is the absolute content that is effective. Furthermore, sometimes an assertion is not a part of an effective practice, cognitive or practical, as for example, when it is idle or speculative. With these, too, we have no need to distinguish absolute and effective contents. In short, I invoke a distinct notion of effective content in a restricted class of situations. I do not multiply contents across the board. A final clarification: Effective contents are not in general grasped—sometimes they are not even graspable—by the participants in conceptual practices. The astronomical example provides an illustration of this phenomenon. The astronomer’s assertion can well be a productive part of certain practices in his community (e.g., farming practices) and so can have an effective content, but the astronomer may be in no position to make explicit this content.

Grimaltos and Moya seem to me right about the ant example. When Fred, the owner of the ant colony, asserts “Charlie is nibbling on a leaf,” it may well be that pragmatic factors make it plain that it is Ant A that Fred means to talk about. And the productiveness of Fred’s assertion may well be explained by seeing its effective content as “Ant A is nibbling on a leaf.” In this case, the effective content will be pragmatically salient to the participants in the conversation. This does not undermine the usefulness of the notion of effective content, however. It only highlights one of its features: sometimes effective content is identical to a pragmatically generated content; for

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18 See “Meaning and Misconceptions,” p. 32.

19 If Grimaltos and Moya were correct in their characterization of absolute content, a separate notion of content would be necessary in virtually all cases.

20 “Meaning and Misconceptions,” pp. 31-32.
example, sometimes it is identical to “speaker’s meaning.”

Grimaltos and Moya do not seem to me right about the astronomical example. They say that the ordinary content of the ancient astronomer’s assertion “The Sun is in Capricorn today” is simply true. Grimaltos and Moya do not provide an explicit account of what this content is, but they appear to hold that the content has the shape, “Relative to the Earth, the Sun is in such-and-such a position today.” Grimaltos and Moya offer only one substantive consideration in favor of their position, and it is that the astronomer “would accept that the Sun might not be in Capricorn if seen from, say, Venus.” This idea does not fit my understanding of ancient conceptions of space and the constellations: “being in Capricorn” was not taken by the ancients to be relative in the way Grimaltos and Moya suppose. The ancient astronomer, as I conceive him, would insist that the perceiver’s location is irrelevant to the Sun’s being in Capricorn, and hence, he would reject the idea that the Sun might not be in Capricorn if seen from Venus. Anyhow, we can bypass all debate about ancient astronomy for the main point before us, which is that in some practices, assertions with erroneous ordinary contents perform valuable cognitive and practical work. Even if Grimaltos and Moya are right about ancient astronomical conceptions, we can make the desired point by modifying the example a little. We can imagine that the ancients introduced “x is in constellation y” through an explicit definition which imparts to this notion no relativity to any further locations. The definition, we can imagine, is so constructed that no actual binary relation constitutes the extension of the notion. The astronomer’s assertion is bound to have, in this setting, an erroneous ordinary content. Nonetheless, the assertion may perform valuable work within the practices of the community, and the notion of effective content will help us understand how this is possible. Note that in the present example, effective content will not be pragmatically recoverable by the participants in ancient astronomical practices.

Grimaltos and Moya are right to observe that our ordinary notion of content is not holistic

21 Note also that effective content is not necessarily a part of the absolute content. The absolute content of ‘Charlie is nibbling on a leaf’ does not include as a part the content of ‘Ant A is nibbling on a leaf’.


23 Of course, the astronomer might accept that the Sun will not look to be in Capricorn from certain locations, but that is irrelevant to the present point.
and that referential links to objects make an important contribution to it. They are right also to stress the importance of pragmatic factors. But these sound observations do not force the notion of effective content into the unemployment line.

4. Experience: Corbí

Corbí raises the following question in his essay:

(Q) In virtue of what does an experience yield a particular given?²⁴

He argues that I cannot provide a satisfactory answer to this question, for on any answer, the given in experience “will become not only hypothetical, but propositional as well (§9),” and this goes against one of the central theses of *E&E*. Corbí goes on to propose a contextualist approach to (Q), one that embraces the idea that the given is propositional.

I think Corbí’s question (Q) is a good one. His argument, however, that I cannot provide a satisfactory answer to it rests on misconceptions. Corbí says that the rational contribution of an experience *e*, according to my account, is fixed by a set of conditionals such as the following (§2):

(*) Experience *e* in combination with view *v*, *entitles* the agent holding *v* to make some perceptual judgments *PJ*.

He maintains that this “functional” explanation of the given needs to be supplemented with “an account of how experience *e* is to be individuated (§3).” Corbí draws parallels to dispositional theories of color and to a functional specification of “(computer) mouse.” Here, too, a parallel demand is legitimate, and it is met by specifying individuating conditions that are independent of the functional specification. Similarly, Corbí argues, I must supply an account of individuating conditions that is independent of an experience’s “capacity to fulfill the function which . . . constitutes its rational contribution (§3).” But any such account will be propositionally expressible

and will render the given propositional, contradicting a central thesis of *E&E*. This, in brief, is Corbi’s argument, and it rests on two misconceptions, one secondary and the other primary.

The secondary misconception concerns the demand for individuating conditions and the parallels Corbi draws. One of the aims of, e.g., dispositional analyses of colors is to account for color properties. Here it is plain that interdependent characterizations of “red” and “experience of red” such as the following fail to pick out a particular color.

*Red* is the surface property of things which typically causes experiences of red in people who have such things before the eyes. *Experience of red* is the inner state of people which is the typical effect of having red things before the eyes.\(^{25}\)

This characterization is satisfied not just by red but by every other color, for it remains true if ‘red’ is uniformly replaced in it by, say, ‘yellow’. To pick out the color red, one needs to provide an individuation of it that goes beyond the above characterization. However, this example would be an apt parallel to the theory I have offered only if that theory aimed to provide an account of experiences, or a special class of them. But this is *not* its aim. The aim instead is to understand the *rational contribution* of experience and, more specifically, the logical character of this contribution. A better parallel to the theory I have offered is provided by the theory of meaning. One can wonder how one should think of the meaning of declarative sentences. Are these meanings best thought of as sets of possible worlds, or states of affairs, or Fregean thoughts, or something else? The question of the individuation (and the nature) of sentences may in itself be very interesting, but it is not germane to this inquiry into meaning. Similarly, the question of the individuation (and the nature) of experiences, though in itself fascinating, is not germane to the inquiry conducted in *E&E*. The question this inquiry addresses is not “What is an experience?,” nor “When do we have one experience, and when two?,” but “What is given in an experience—that is, what is its rational contribution?”

The primary misconception in Corbi’s argument concerns the answer I offer to this question. The given, according to my proposal, does not consist of propositions of form (*). Instead, it is analogous to an argument schema: it establishes rational links between views and

\(^{25}\)From David Lewis, quoted by Corbi in §7.
perceptual judgments. Experience does not, by itself, entitle us to affirm perceptual judgments; it does so only in conjunction with an antecedent rational view (or a specific rational part of a view).\textsuperscript{26} Now views, I have insisted, are not simply propositions or conjunctions of propositions (\textit{E\&E}, p. 82). Hence, the rational link an experience brings about between a view and a perceptual judgment cannot be formulated as a conditional proposition and, in particular, not as (*).

Furthermore, and this is the more important point, the rational transition from view to perceptual judgment is not mediated by a judgment about experience. Suppose that a subject is rational in holding the commonsense view of the world, and suppose also that she has an experience of a red tomato. The subject is rational in her perceptual judgment “That tomato is red,” and this rationality does not require the prior rationality of a judgment such as “This experience has so-and-so characteristics.” It is a Cartesian conception that the rational contribution of an experience consists primarily of judgments about that experience. And it is this idea that leads to the two principal traditional moves in the epistemology of perception: (i) the denigration of the role of experience in empirical knowledge, and (ii) the attempt to base empirical knowledge on subjective grounds. One of the main aims of my book is to show a way to avoid Cartesian conceptions while respecting the sound elements in their underlying motivations. It is vital to this aim that we not think of judgments about experience as being epistemically prior to ordinary perceptual judgments. Corbi’s argument that I cannot satisfactorily answer the question (Q) rests crucially on the misconception that any answer I provide here would become incorporated in the given. This just is not so. Conditionals of form (*) are not a satisfactory way to capture the given, as my proposal conceives it.

Nonetheless, as I have already noted, the question Corbi raises is a good one. In virtue of what does an experience yield a particular given? What characteristics of an experience bring about rational linkages between views and certain particular judgments? I did not provide a specific answer to this question in my book, for I was primarily concerned there with broad

\textsuperscript{26}We can mathematically represent the given as a function from views to perceptual judgments, just as we can represent an argument schema as a function from sets of judgments to judgments. This representation can be useful. Nonetheless, it should be kept in mind that it is only a representation and not the real thing. Furthermore, the fact that the given, when thus modeled, is a function makes the theory offered similar to functionalist theories only in name. The issue I am addressing is radically different from that addressed by functionalist theories of, e.g., experience.
logical issues. The general answer I offered was that the given is founded on the phenomenology of experience (E&E, p. 107), where phenomenology is something that a veridical experience, for example, can share with a subjectively identical hallucination. I did not provide in the book an account of phenomenology and of its connection to rationality. I have offered such an account in lectures in Valencia and other places, and I plan to publish it in due course. My concern here is to make plain that by offering the account, I do nothing to undermine any of the central theses of E&E.27

References

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27The aspect of phenomenology that founds a particular perceptual judgment may well shift from view to view and, indeed, within a view, from perceptual judgment to perceptual judgment. I happily accept this kind of “contextualism.” I want to insist, however, that the given is not propositional and that judgments about experience are not epistemically prior to ordinary perceptual judgments.


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