

# Starting in the Middle and the Metaphysics of Perspectival Facts

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The main aim of this paper is to trace a line of thought from a methodological starting point to a non-reductive metaphysics of perspectival facts. The methodological starting point is that of evaluating theories against the way the world manifests itself to us. The key here is an externalist understanding of what the manifest world consists in, according to which the manifest world does not consist in ‘common sense’ beliefs, experiences or utterances, but in worldly facts and events. It will be argued that any reductive account of perspectival matters implies that the manifest world is pervasively misleading, and that it thereby undermines the methodology of appealing to the manifest world. If this is right, then there is a rather direct implication from the defended methodological starting point to a non-reductive metaphysics of perspectival matters.

## *1. Introduction*

The aim of this paper is to trace a line of thought from a certain methodological starting point to a metaphysical view according to which the world harbours irreducibly perspectival and indexical facts. If one shares the assumption that the described methodological starting point must be adopted in our theorizing, then one thereby has good reason to believe in irreducible perspectival and indexical facts.

Perspectival facts can be loosely characterized as facts that concern the way things are from a limited perspective or under restricted conditions, and by ‘indexical facts’ I will mean facts that concern who one is, where one is, what time it is, and so on. If there are irreducibly perspectival and indexical facts, then things genuinely have the properties that they only seem to have under certain local conditions, for example: things will have the temporal properties that they only seem to have at a particular time (such as being just straight, or just bent), or experiential states will genuinely have the phenomenal properties that these experiences only manifests when one is the one who is undergoing the experience (Nagel 1986: Ch. 2), or things will genuinely have the colours (understood as intrinsic surface qualities as per Campbell 1994) that they only manifest when one observes these things under certain lighting conditions and one is a person with a certain type of visual apparatus, and so on.

To deny that there are irreducibly perspectival or indexical fact is to think that a description of the world does not, in order to be complete, need to attribute these properties to things (at most it needs to be included that things merely appear to have these properties). Any ‘absolute conception’ (Williams 1978) or fully objective and eternal description of things can say in principle all there is to say about the world – if there are no irreducible perspectival or indexical facts in the sense that is relevant to our discussion.

Various people have been exploring a metaphysics of irreducible perspectival facts. There is quite an array of different approaches. The list arguably includes adverbialism (Johnston 1987), plurallism (Sylvan 1997), sofism (Haslanger 2003),

fragmentalism (Fine 2005, Lipman 2016, Simon *forthcoming*), external relativism (Fine 2005), multimundialism (Rovane 2008; 2011), factual relativism (Einheuser 2008; 2012), dynamic absolutism (Correia and Rosenkranz 2012), pluralism (Solomyak 2013), egocentric presentism (Hare 2009), subjectivism (Merlo 2016) and variabilism (Spencer 2016), and this list probably fails to be exhaustive. Each of these views seeks to offer a non-reductive account of some type of perspectival fact.

The arguments that have been given in support of these views have typically been tied to a specific perspectival phenomenon. In the case of time, for example, the argument starts from the assumption that there seems to be a genuine temporal change of things or a genuine passage of time, and it is then argued that we need to postulate facts whose reality is somehow restricted to times to capture this (see e.g. Johnston 1987, Haslanger 2003, Fine 2005, and Correia and Rosenkranz 2012). Or, in the case of conscious experience, it is argued that there is something it is like to undergo one's own experience, and that this gives us reason to believe in subjective facts (see e.g. Hare 2009 and Merlo 2016). Besides time and subjectivity, there are particular arguments concerning contingency (Solomyak 2013) and concerning the idea that certain matters depend on conventions or paradigms (see e.g. Einheuser 2008 and Sylvan 1997). These arguments are as strong as their specific intuitive starting assumptions: the claim that there is change or a passage of time, that there is something it is like to undergo one's own experience, and so on.

This paper offers a more general argument for perspectival and indexical facts, one that does not start from appealing to this or that specific manifest fact (such as that time passes, or that there is something it is like to undergo one's own experience) but that steps back and starts from the methodological assumption that we ought to appeal to such manifest facts in the first place, combined with a very rough characterization of those manifest facts. What this sort of argument loses in specificity and precision, it gains in robustness. When the starting point is some specific description of some single manifest fact, one can doubt whether this is indeed a manifest fact or whether it is rather some fact in the neighborhood ('does time really pass *in that sense*?'). Also, a revisionary treatment of the single manifest fact can seem relatively local and so not very worrying, at least not as worrying as the metaphysics that one would otherwise have to adopt. When the starting point is rather the very methodology of appealing to manifest facts combined with a relatively weak and general observation about the sorts of facts that are manifest, the argument becomes harder to plausibly resist.

A subsidiary point that that will emerge is that the plausibility of perspectival antirealism seems to rely on what I will call an internalist understanding of the manifest world as a set of representations, such as a body of commonsense beliefs or of ordinary talk. I will argue that we should prefer an externalist understanding of the manifest world as one of ordinary things, facts or events. When thus understood, the manifest world provides a much tighter constraint on our theorizing, and renders perspectival antirealism much less plausible in light of it. This point may prove to be of wider interest as it will plausibly generalize: an externalist understanding of the manifest world may undermine various sorts of eliminative views and paraphrase schemes, not just eliminativism about perspectival matters.

## 2. *The manifest world and starting in the middle*

One risk that we face in our theorizing is that we spin off in our own fabricated bubbles of alleged facts because we evaluate the theory against the alleged facts that the theory

itself fabricates. It should not be the theories that tell us what data they should be held accountable to. We want some type of external foothold. One may look here to our observations of the world, starting with our everyday perceptions and experiences. But this does not provide enough of a foothold. The problem returns: we do not want theories to tell us what it is that we observe when we make a particular observation. We need to start with a certain pre-given picture of what it is that we observe and experience, of how things roughly hang together and of how best to theoretically expand our understanding of that world. What we take ourselves to observe and experience is part of a pre-given picture of what the world is like. In the first instance, then, we start with how the world is given to us; we start with what is typically called the manifest world or the manifest facts. When faced with a new theory, you turn first of all turn to the world that you find yourself directly immersed in and ask: does it make sense of *that*? I will refer to this as the process of checking for the plausibility of the theory (or plausibility checking, for short).

There are some strong reasons to think that we cannot do without evaluating theories against a pre-given picture of the world. Lewis puts it nicely:

[I]t is pointless to build a theory, however nicely systematized it may be, that would be unreasonable to believe. And a theory cannot earn credence just by its unity and economy. What credence it cannot earn, it must inherit. It is far beyond our power to weave a brand new fabric of adequate theory *ex nihilo*, so we must perforce conserve the one we've got. A worthwhile theory must be credible, and a credible theory must be conservative. It cannot gain, and it cannot deserve, credence if it disagrees with too much of what we thought before. (Lewis 1986: 134).

Refraining from evaluating theories against the manifest world risks rendering our theorizing unhinged. It is the glue that holds the theoretical virtues together. The notion of explanatory power becomes vacuous when there are no manifest facts that can serve as constraining explananda. Explanatory power becomes vacuous when we allow a theory to tell us what it takes its own data to be. The mere simplicity and elegance of a theory are thin reeds on which to base one's theory-building, and risk skewing our theories when they are not counterbalanced by explanatory adequacy, determined by the manifest phenomena. Abandoning the method of plausibility checking is especially dubious from one's own perspective: the manifest world is just the world as you take it to be, and hence to refrain from checking theories against the manifest world is to allow that theories do not need to account for the world that you find yourself in, that they do not need to get the facts straight. It's hard to see how this still counts as theorizing at all.

Much depends on how, exactly, we think the world manifests itself, and hence what theories are held accountable to. 'Analyze theory-building how we will, we must all start in the middle', Quine remarked (1960: 4). Quine's 'middle' here is that of our *middle*-sized and our *middle*-distanced environment, and of a conceptualization of this environment that probably lies *midway* the theoretical and cultural progress of humankind (1960: 4). More or less in line with this, I take the manifest world to be a world of laptops, shoes and skyscrapers, that is, a world of objects of various determinate weights, shapes and sizes. They exhibit a qualitative display of colours, smells, noises, temperatures, and so on. There are red wines, fragrant roses, thundering airplanes and hot cups of coffee. Some of these objects are solid, like my steel desk, others perforated, like the sponge in my bathroom. Some of these objects are moving around, like the cars I see outside my apartment, and other are at rest, like myself sitting here. It is an environment that partakes

in an ongoing temporal progression of events that involve these objects – such as how your reading this sentence turns into your reading of the next. It's a progression in which some events occur simultaneously and some successively. There are subjects that enjoy a conscious stream of experiences and thoughts, like you and I. Amongst these subjects there is me and, roughly speaking, what I take to be the manifest world is in accord with what, within *that* manifest world, I take myself to experience and believe. I take it that you also experience and believe things and that when you check theories against the manifest world, this will be equivalent to checking the theories against what you experience and believe to be the case.

There are some things to note here. The characterization of the manifest world does not see it as consisting solely of beliefs and experiences, but includes ordinary things and events, and their ordinary properties and relations (cf. Quine 1960: §1). We can distinguish between internalist and externalist construals of the manifest world, a distinction noted by Stalnaker (2008: 2). The internalist construes the theoretical starting point as consisting in what we can loosely describe as a body of 'representations': as a certain privileged set of experiences and beliefs, and their contents. Or, a more linguistic variant of this approach might construe our manifest starting point as the set of ordinary language sentences that we ordinarily take to be true – our ordinary talk. In contrast, an 'externalist' takes the theoretical starting points to consist of worldly things and worldly facts and events. When I check theories against what one believes, according to the externalist, one does not check them for implying the truth of those beliefs, one checks them for matching *what* one believes.

This paper assumes that the externalist construal of the manifest world is right. The internalist and linguistic starting points seem to me to be philosophical oddities that misconstrue what we should evaluate theories against. Theories are not to be checked simply for explaining the beliefs and experiences we have, or the sentences we utter. This idea seems to be the hangover of an ill-begotten obsession with language that typifies earlier analytic philosophy. Scientific theories of the world clearly aim to make sense of worldly matters. Theories are evaluated for explaining manifest things like thunderstorms, diseases and market fluctuations, a rich manifest world of which experiences, beliefs and ordinary utterances are but a thin slice. A scientific theory aims to improve our understanding of worldly phenomena, not just the representations of those worldly matters. There is no reason why philosophy should be different. Its proposals too should, first of all, be held accountable to the world of thunderstorms, diseases and market fluctuations – and, in the first instance, by not denying that there are such things.

Let me illustrate the evaluation against a manifest world understood in externalist terms. If I read Parmenides' poem, I can only truly endorse Parmenides' theory – that there is only one, immutable, undivided whole, and that there is no real plurality – if I can regard, for example, *this very manifest desk with laptop and plants on it* as misleading. And similarly for many other manifest facts, which are manifest under all kinds of arbitrary conditions. That is, I can only endorse Parmenides' theory if I regard the manifest world around me to be, *by default*, misleading. So: to endorse Parmenides' theory I must abandon the method of checking theories against the world of thunderstorms, diseases and market fluctuations. Conversely, as long as I adopt the methodology, Parmenides' theory fails to be credible. I cannot make the jump as long as I do not relapse from the methodology.

Someone might object that *if* I were to fully endorse Parmenides' theory, then the world would come to manifest itself as one, immutable, undivided whole, and then I check theories against *that*. So am I not begging the question by tollensing it on the basis of manifest facts? Why be so conservative about what one currently happens to believe? But

this is not right. *Given the way the world manifests itself* – namely as including a diversity of mind-independent objects of various determinate weights, shapes and sizes, exhibiting a qualitative display of colours, smells, noises, temperatures, and so on – I have absolutely no reason to believe that this changes if I adopt the new theory. It is not part of the manifest world that the manifest facts depend on what I believe. So, given the way the world is, I cannot simply change my mind in radical ways about what the manifest world is like whilst keeping the methodology of plausibility checking in place. The hypothesis that the manifest world will seem different after fully and thoroughly endorsing the theory does nothing to soften its implausibility in light of the given facts that I recognize. You just need to keep your wits about you and not be misled to bracket the basis on which to theorize. This is not the way to be open-minded, or philosophically neutral. Given what the given facts are like, the objection embodies a sinister suggestion: ‘you will become deeply confused about the facts and, in this state of confusion, you will not be worried about being so confused, so just make the jump’. Given the way the world manifests itself, I *first* have to abandon the methodology of plausibility checking before I could be in a position to endorse the radical Parmenidean theory under consideration.

One may worry as follows: not all pre-theoretical beliefs are created equal, there can be substantial differences in one’s credences, and these are lost when all beliefs are translated to so-called manifest facts. There is something to this worry of course, but the worry does not really undermine the externalist stance. Externalism is perfectly compatible with the possibility of misdescribing the facts, or with being unsure whether something is a manifest fact or not, or with a hazy sense of the manifest facts due to conflicting beliefs, or with the manifest world simply leaving certain matters open. In particular: when a theory denies something that is clearly a manifest fact, this seriously undermines the theory, but when the theory postulates something that happens not to be a manifestly given as a real matter and nor is it manifestly given that it is not real, this is hardly a cost at all. The postulate simply needs to earn its keep in that case, possibly by helping make sense of those things that *are* clearly given. That not every question can be decided by a direct appeal to the manifest world does not mean that no question can be so decided. Differences in credences translate to how costly a conflict with the relevant matters is deemed to be, and they thus correspond to our assuredness in appealing to those matters in evaluating a theory.

The fact that checking for plausibility is a graded matter and relies on good judgment (*cf.* Lewis 1086: 134) in no way requires that ‘the facts’ must be graded, or that *they* depend on our judgment. The balancing and gradation lies in our appeal to the facts, not in the facts themselves. And so plausibility checking is not immediately undermined by local discrepancies between what we take to be the true description of things and the manifest world: we may have some illusory experience or some mistaken opinions, which we can reject or revise without this undermining the epistemic value of appealing to the manifest world in evaluating our theories. Sometimes it is unclear what exact fact is manifest to us. We are open to local revision, and we are open to additions to the facts that we take to obtain. But discrepancy between theory and the manifest world can only go so far. How far, exactly, is a nebulous question but that such discrepancy counts against a theory should strike us as a natural thought.

We also should not conflate an externalist construal of the manifest world with an objective conception of it, a conception that is somehow averaged, or that we intersubjectively converge on. If there is one sane person in a community whose members all have insane beliefs, we think the sane person is right in appealing to the manifest facts as she sees them.

Relatedly, we also should not conflate an externalist conception of the manifest world with a view from nowhere and nowhen. Stalnaker (2008: 3) appears to take these to be equivalent but they are not. Think of an objective conception as one that is invariantly true across experiential points of view, and times, and other kinds of points of view. The manifest world can be the world of external things without also being the world as it manifests itself to a view from nowhere and nowhen. Being not necessarily mental or representational is one thing, being objective – in this sense – is another. Not only are they separate matters, there are *prima facie* reasons to think that these can come apart. What I take to be the manifest world is in one-one correspondence with the contents of the beliefs and experiences that I self-ascribe. This is essentially the correspondence that underlies Moore's paradox, the fact that it does not seem rationally permissible for me to say, for example, that there is no table in the room *and* that I believe that there is a table (*cf.* 1942: 540-3 and 1944: 204). That is to say, it does not seem rationally permissible that I take something to be a fact and describe myself as failing to believe that it is. Noting this correspondence between what I take to be the manifest world and the beliefs I self-ascribe, we should further note that what I believe and experience cannot simply be presumed to be objective or intersubjectively invariant, and hence the manifest world cannot be presumed to be objective. Starting with an externalist construal of the manifest world is not the same as starting with an objective conception of the world; they might well come apart. Below I argue that they indeed do come apart.

One may wonder about the relation between what I have called plausibility checking and the so-called Mooreanism that is sometimes attributed to Kripke (1972: 42), Armstrong (1980: 440), and Lewis (1986: 134), and a version of which is explicitly endorsed by Fine (2001: 2) and Schaffer (2009: 257). This depends of course on what we understand Mooreanism to be. Mooreanism is sometimes understood as aiming for some kind of fit between theory and common sense. To the extent that we take 'common sense' to refer to a certain set of beliefs, or 'intuitions', this implies an internalist conception of our starting points and hence differs from the externalist conception defended here. To repeat: evaluation against the manifest world does not in the first instance check for a fit with beliefs or intuitions, or utterances, or their correctness or incorrectness, so neither does it check for a fit with the commonsense ones. We rather check for a fit with the world.

The internalist (mis)construal of the manifest world invites the following question: whence the special justification of the special beliefs or intuitions that must be 'saved' by theories, why must *they* be saved (Sider 2007: §2)? Mooreanism might be associated with the claim that their being commonsensical explains the special justification of the beliefs or intuitions that we take as data, or that they are justified by being beliefs in special 'hinge propositions' (Wittgenstein 1969: §§341-3), or something of this sort. But the question of justification does not apply to thunderstorms, diseases and market fluctuations, these are not the sorts of things that can be justified in the relevant sense, and yet it is fitting these facts, and explaining them, that we demand of theories. These versions of Mooreanism are thus decidedly different from the externalist understanding of the manifest world proposed here.

Sider (2007: 248) also considers a version of Mooreanism that is very much like the plausibility checking characterized here and argues that dismissing the question of justification is a fig leaf, given the suspicious correspondence between the manifest world and the contents of common sense beliefs. Sider considers a Moorean who simply appeals to a statement describing some worldly fact as a premise in a *reductio* of a given theory, and writes:

These propositions that Mooreans simply take as premises exhibit a striking pattern: they include all the dictates of common sense. If Mooreans realize this but are unwilling to regard common sense as a source of justification, it would be unreasonable (and un-self-aware) for them to continue insisting on the premises, unless they have reason to believe that there is another source (or sources) of justification for the premises. (Sider 2007: 248).

Sider's point seems to be that when we check theories against facts concerning thunderstorms, diseases and market fluctuations the beliefs in these matters fall within a certain class, namely they are all common sense beliefs, and when we appeal to these facts, we must be able to cite the justification for the beliefs within that class or else come up with some other justification for the beliefs in the facts that we appeal to.

This does not seem right to me. First of all, I think that Sider gets the 'striking pattern' wrong: the pattern is not between the alleged facts and the contents of a special class of common sense beliefs, the pattern is between the alleged facts that I countenance and the contents of the beliefs that I self-ascribe. When I evaluate a theory for plausibility, I will appeal to facts that correspond to the contents of the beliefs that I attribute to myself. This is entirely trivial and not a surprising pattern that suggests a special source of justification – it holds across the board for all kinds of belief. The correspondence is not between alleged facts and common sense beliefs, but between alleged facts and what I believe the world to be like. It may of course be that, when engaging in argument, I will try to appeal as much as I can to those facts that are also believed by many others, but that is because I want to show why many others will also have reason to believe my claim, not because I think being a widespread belief is a source of justification. It is the dialectical context, and the dialectical aims of argumentation in particular, that explains the apparent commonalities in the premises here. There are commonalities to which they are exceptions: there can be a dialectical point to showing where certain idiosyncratic or at least not clearly commonsensical premises can lead. Besides the demand that we explain the alleged pattern, there is also the claim that it is unreasonable to insist on a premise unless one is able to cite one's source of justification for one's belief in the premise. I see no *prima facie* reason to think that this is a reasonable demand. It implies that we can only engage in argument when keeping track of the sources of justification for each of our beliefs, which none of us really manage to do (Harman 1986: 41). Argumentation would be beholden to agreement on epistemological matters, which it is not. Arguments clearly do not need to bottom out in agreed claims of sources of justification in order to be successful, indeed, what the legitimate sources of justification are will itself plausibly depend on what we take the world to be like.

All of this is not to deny that I have beliefs corresponding to the facts that I appeal to, that I can point to sources of apparent justification for many of these beliefs, and hence that the harmony between what I take to be facts and what I take to be my beliefs suggest that the apparent sources of justification are indeed sources of justification. My experience of the world as well as other kinds of observations are the most prominent examples of such sources of justification. But, all of this, the facts, the beliefs, and the sources of justification, are mere proper parts of the much broader manifest world against which we should check theories for their plausibility.

One may doubt at this point whether the distinction between starting with beliefs and starting with a manifest world is ultimately a distinction that makes a dialectical difference. How it makes a difference should become clear below.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. *The manifest world is a perspectival world*

The manifest world is a world of perspectival properties. What appears green to you, may appear blue to someone with a slightly different visual apparatus. What appears straight from the perspective of one time, might appear bent from the perspective of a later time. What appears to be on the right of the tree may appear on the left of it from the perspective of a different orientation in space. What appears to be at rest from your frame of reference, may appear to be moving from the perspective of a frame of reference that is moving with respect to yours. We learn from the special theory of relativity that such frames can further disagree about the shapes, sizes, and lengths of objects, and about the durations of - and simultaneity relations between events. From microphysics we learn that things that appear solid or filled from the perspective of one scale, appear almost completely empty from the perspective of smaller scales. The way the world happens to manifest itself to you is perspectival in the sense of depending on the many kinds of perspectives that you happen to occupy.

Perhaps this characterization of the manifest world, as a world of perspectival properties, might turn out to be mistaken on one or two points. Perhaps, on closer inspection, an object does not manifest itself as being on the right of another, or perhaps an object does not manifest itself as non-solid at the microscopic scale. But that the manifest world of ordinary things is a world of perspectival properties in general seems to me to be beyond doubt. Shapes, sizes, solidity, colours, smells, constant velocities, simultaneity, durations – all of it is perspective-dependent in some way, many in multiple ways. The manifest world is a perspectival world through and through. Any theory that claims that there are, in general, no perspectival facts *whatsoever* is in a pervasive disagreement with the manifest world against which I check theories for plausibility.

Consider a view that rejects the instantiation of the perspectival properties in the world. One fairly standard account of perspectival matters reduces them to simple relational facts. In abstract terms: if, at perspective  $x$ , an  $n$ -adic property  $F^n$  holds of  $y$ , one might take this to consist in  $y$  bearing a  $n+1$ -adic relation  $F^{n+1}$  to  $x$  (see e.g. Moore 1987: 4; Streiffer 2003: 4; Wright 2008: 158–59; Beardsley 1983: 265). For instance: to say that, relative to orientation  $o_1$ , Mary is on the left of John is – one might think – just to say that Mary is on the left of John in relation to  $o_1$ .

Imagine a complete description of all such relational facts. Such a description diverges from the way the world manifests itself to you. It is important here not to be misled by the typographical similarity between the predicate and the ‘relativized’ counterpart, between ‘is  $F^n$ ’ and ‘is  $F^{n+1}$ ’ (Boghossian 2006). They express two different properties, the one more relational than the other. The more objective description is in terms of the  $n+1$ -place relations; but the world manifests itself in terms of the  $n$ -place properties and relations. The  $n$ -place properties and relations are simply missing from the description in terms of the relational notions.

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<sup>1</sup> There is much more to be said about the externalist understanding of the pre-given world, for example, about the precise sort of ‘fit’ that we seek, and about its relation to dogmatism (in the sense of Pryor 2000) and to Bayesianism. This has to be left for another occasion. I want to turn to the implication of the methodology for our metaphysical theories of the world.

One might think that, perhaps, we globally misdescribe the way the world manifests itself to us when we describe it as manifesting the relevant  $n$ -place properties. Again: there may be specific cases that we misdescribe but this thought is implausible as a general claim about the general character of the manifest world. As others have pointed out, it is first of all *prima facie* implausible that perspectival properties are not part of the manifest world. As Lewis put it for the case of intrinsic properties involved in change across time: ‘if we know what shape is, we know that it is a property, not a relation’ (Lewis 1986: 204). We generally know what sorts of properties things seem to have.

That the manifest world is indeed a perspectival world can be bolstered by further considerations. If there at least exist the property of roundness, if it is at least metaphysically possible that some object has the simple intrinsic non-relational shape property of being round, then there seems to be no reason to think that the ball in front of me does not manifest itself as having exactly this property. Of course one could deny that the property exists at all, that it is metaphysically impossible that something has the perspectival property – but the conflicting perspectives in the actual world that involve the property do not motivate a radical denial of the existence of the property. Say that one believes that roundness is really a relation to a time, the relation of *being round-at*, then at a possible world in which there is no time, one must either deny that there is no sense in which things could be round there, or one must accept that there is a kind of intrinsic roundness that things could have in such a world, which does not consist in a relation to a time (Sider 2001: §4.7; Simon *forthcoming*). But not only are there now two kinds of roundness, it also seems that whatever intrinsic roundness property something could have in the timeless world, the ball in front of me is manifesting itself as having *that* very property. I think this argument generalizes: for many properties whose instantiation turns out to be tied to some perspective, we can imagine a possibility in which the instantiation is not so tied because of the global absence of the perspectives of the relevant kind. The perspectival properties at least exist, but if they exist, things manifest themselves as having them as well.

The properties of things underwrite a matrix of qualitative similarities and differences, and of compatibilities and incompatibilities of the beliefs and experiences concerning these things (Spencer 2016: 443; Lipman 2016: 44). The objective description does not underwrite the structural matrix that we attribute to the manifest world. If you and I each observe an object under different lighting conditions and with a different type of visual apparatus, and yet we observe it both as being pure yellow, we observe it as being qualitatively similar with respect to colour. Our experiences are qualitatively similar because we observe objects having the same colour property, namely pure yellow. Your experiencing one complex relation involving your visual apparatus and my experiencing another complex relation involving my visual apparatus are not two experiences with a common content that can underwrite the manifest similarity. Similarly, if you experience something as pure yellow and I experience the same thing as pure blue, we experience two incompatible scenes. The relevant complex relations involving lighting conditions and visual apparatus are however compatible. The contents of our experience and beliefs are not mischaracterized as involving  $n$ -place properties and relations. They do involve these: if they didn’t, we would be radically mistaken in what things we take to be similar and different, and about what experiences and beliefs seem to us to be compatible and incompatible.

One might object that, although the objective picture does not strictly speaking correspond to the way the world manifests itself to us, we only need to add further principles to close the gap. Start again with the claim that things stand in various relations to times, orientations, frames of reference, and so on. One might think that we just need

to add to this the fact that you and I are also occupying some of the relata that appear hidden from us as it were, that the world manifests itself to you a certain way whilst you occupy a certain time, orientation, seeing the world through a particular type of visual apparatus, and so on. You are occupying the various relata of the  $n+1$ -place relations attributed to things.

But adding the fact that you occupy the relevant relata does not help. Nothing follows from this that renders it closer to the way the world manifests itself to you. We still have a picture in terms of  $n+1$ -place relations that does not correspond to the manifest world, combined with an identification of oneself as being one of the subjects, itself related to various relata of those relations. The  $n$ -place relations remain as absent from this picture as before.

One might think that we could add yet further explanatory principles. Thus we might stipulate that if subject  $s$  experiences that John is on the left of Mary, and  $s$  has orientation  $o_1$ , then the experience is veridical if and only if John is on the left of Mary in relation to  $o_1$ . Experiences of colours can be deemed veridical when things stand in the appropriate physical or dispositional relations to visual apparatus and lighting conditions, and so on. The semantic trick can be applied to experiences concerning other perspectival matters, as well as to the correctness conditions of beliefs and the truth conditions of utterances. In general, the idea is to add principles to the effect that, for a given  $n+1$ -place relation  $F^{n+1}$ , if subject  $s$  is at  $x$ , then  $s$  represents (or is disposed to represent) that  $F^n$  but the representation is true on the basis of the  $n+1$ -place relation  $F^{n+1}$ , whose instantiation involves  $x$  as well (the ‘hidden’ index). Needless to say, we would need to be given some explanation of why this semantic principle holds, and why these are not ad hoc additions. But let us assume that some story could be given here.

It is at this point that the distinction between an internalist and externalist construal of the manifest world becomes crucial. With the added principles, the reductive theory is now closer to the manifest world in terms of agreeing with the manifest contents of those experiences, beliefs or utterances that are attributed to subjects, and in terms of agreeing with their veridicality, correctness or truth. If that was all there is to the manifest world, no gap would remain. On the internalist approach, the manifest world consists in nothing more than the experiences, beliefs or utterances of subjects and their apparent veridicality, correctness, truth and assertability; and hence on this construal of the manifest starting point, the reductive theory now matches the manifest starting points.

In contrast: given an externalist construal, little has been done to close the gap that is at issue. Just to illustrate with a concrete case, imagine we have a complete description of time-relativized facts, so a description that describes how things are ‘at’ each time:

it rains *at*  $t_1$  and it is cloudy *at*  $t_1$  and it is windy *at*  $t_1$  and ...  
it is sunny *at*  $t_2$  and it is clear *at*  $t_2$  and it is windy *at*  $t_2$  and ...  
...

Temporal facts can be understood as an example of a perspectival fact. You look out of the window and you see that it rains and that it is cloudy. It seems clear that the description leaves out these facts. It is one thing for a fact to obtain, and it is a different thing for it to be relative to a specific time. The description misses the temporal facts concerning the properties of things that admit of change. It also leaves out what time it is. I look at the clock, and it turns out that it is  $t_1$  and not  $t_2$ . This temporally locating fact, of where we are in time, is missing from the relativized description.

One might think that we just need to add to the relativized description the standard reductive accounts of how perspectival representations of various kinds are made true by

a non-perspectival world. Say we add a token reflexive account of indexical beliefs (Reichenbach 1947):

any token belief that  $p$ , which a subject  $s$  has at  $t$ , is correct if and only if  $p$  at  $t$

If we add this principle together with the token experiences and beliefs of subjects to our earlier picture, we arrive at the following:

it rains at  $t_1$  and it is cloudy at  $t_1$  and it is windy at  $t_1$  and ...

it is sunny at  $t_2$  and it is clear at  $t_2$  and it is windy at  $t_2$  and ...

...

any token belief that  $p$ , which a subject  $s$  has at  $t$ , is correct if and only if  $p$  at  $t$

...

$s$  has at  $t_1$  the correct token belief that the sun is shining and that the sky is clear and ...

$s$  has at  $t_2$  the incorrect token belief that the sun is shining and that the sky is clear and ...

...

The objective story can explain the correctness of the token beliefs mentioned in the objective story, in terms of the relativized facts that are also mentioned in the story. If the manifest starting point merely consisted in what token beliefs are correct and which aren't, the story would no longer diverge from the manifest starting points.

But none of this helps if we understand the manifest world in externalist terms. The story is no closer to capturing the simple fact that it rains and that it is cloudy, nor does it capture the fact that it is  $t_1$  and not  $t_2$ . The semantic principles merely account for the features of the representational entities in the world, whilst continuing to disagree with the manifest features of thunderstorms, diseases and market fluctuations. Given the non-perspectival description with the added semantic principles, I still need to look at the blue wall in front of me and think of the intrinsic blueness that appears to sit on the surface of the wall as unreal. The shape of the book on my desk, it's lying still, it's solidity, and so on: it's just not what any non-perspectival theory is stating the world to be like. If a theory holds that the manifest external world is misleading except for which experiences, beliefs and utterances are true or false, it remains a theory that I could only endorse if I first abandon the methodology of checking theories for plausibility against the manifest world.

One might object that this line of reasoning overgeneralizes. Because one might similarly argue that it is a manifest fact that one is some particular person, and hence that this should be included in a complete description of the world. Our description of the world would have to be in the first person in to be considered complete and surely that is not right – or so one might think. Quite some philosophers assume that there is no place for indexicals – and especially not for 'I' – in our serious theorizing about the world (Perry 1979: 16; Kaplan 1989; Cappelen and Dever 2013). It's far from clear to me whether this metaphysical assumption is warranted: it seems to me a plausible thought that there is a fact about who  $I$  happen to be. Frege assumed that 'everyone is presented to himself in a particular and primitive way, in which he is presented to no-one else' (Frege 1918: 298). One can think that this a superficial mode of presentation tied to linguistic expression, but it seems to be a much more natural thought that it consists in a fundamental worldly matter somehow. As Nagel observes:

No further fact expressible without the first person will do the trick: however complete we make the centerless conception of the world, the fact that I am TN will be omitted ... [This] seems to be one of the most fundamental things I can say about the world. I shall argue that it provides a clear example of the ineliminability of indexicals from a complete conception of the world, and that it also reveals something about each of us. (Nagel 1986: 56-57).

Though much derided (e.g. in Stalnaker 2003), it's an entirely natural assumption to make: only one subject manifests itself as being you yourself. There is the fact that I am this person and not that one. At the very least we should be open to the thought that any account that leaves who one is should be deemed incomplete. Deeming such a consequence a *reductio* of the line of reasoning defended here seems to me a case of overplaying one's presumptions. The non-indexical description of the world does not in any way look like the language that we really speak, nor even like the language spoken by scientists engaged in the most abstract theoretical sciences (Kripke 2011: 297, 318-19). The non-indexical description of the world seems, in that sense, unnatural besides seeming incomplete.

More importantly however the overgeneralization-objection simply cannot be a genuine worry. Whether a given fact is a dubious fact that should be considered a cost of the theory that posits it is decided precisely by the manifest world: roughly, it is a dubious fact if it is not part of the manifest world and it is hard to see how it would fit in it. So either it is indeed a manifest fact that one is some particular person (as Frege and Nagel suggest), in which case it should also not be worrying to admit this fact, or it is not a manifest fact that one is some particular person, in which case it might indeed be a dubious fact and hence a cost to posit such a fact, but in that case the line of reasoning discussed here does not lead us to posit it. Either way, there is no worry. If the line of reasoning applies, it cannot force us to admit a fact that should be considered a cost in light of the very manifest world that generates the fact. No overgeneralization worry could possibly get off the ground.

Where does this leave us? It leaves us with a metaphysical project. The aim has not been to defend any particular view of perspectival properties but merely to defend the conditional claim that, if we check theories against a manifest world understood in externalist terms, then we have good reasons to believe that things must somehow have the perspectival properties that they appear to have. The metaphysics of perspectival realism is daunting however. In particular, if we have conflicting perspectival pictures of the world, *which* perspectival properties are we to attribute to things? Should we privilege one perspective (Hare 2009, Hellie 2013, and Merlo 2016) or somehow treat all perspectives on a par whilst trying to maintain their prima facie conflicting contents as they appear to us (Fine 2005)? If there are no plausible answers to these questions (argued by Moore 1996, 2016), we thereby face a pressure to abandon the methodology of starting in the middle. On the other hand, if we cannot plausibly abandon the methodology (as I have suggested here), we must search for an adequate theory of perspectival facts.

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