

Yep—still there

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Thanks to Berger, Logue, and Speaks for this thoughtful set of comments.

1 Berger

Why did I do it?

—That is one kind of question. An entirely different one is ‘why did it happen to me?’ What is the difference? Though there are many layers to be peeled back from this particular onion, my view is that any answer to the former must contain, at bottom, some variant of *it made sense in light of blah blah blah*—whereas in the latter case, no element of sense-making need be involved.

Answers of the former sort are *rationalizing explanations*; and when a certain rationalizing explanans explains a certain rationalizing explanandum, we might perhaps say that the former ‘justifies’ the latter.

The notion of *sense-making* is at least a bit elusive. But I am inclined to think it is a first-person notion: something which does not impinge upon my stream of consciousness cannot make sense of anything I do, nor can it be made sense of by any aspect of my condition; by contrast, the character of the stream of consciousness is uniformly available for sense-making—and also in almost all cases (perception and life being the exceptions at the extremes, alongside perhaps certain shifts of attention) for being made sense of.

What goes for me goes for you. And what goes for you goes for ‘pseudo-you’: you as from within the ‘second person perspective’—from within my simulations of you. The core, paradigmatic, fundamental notion of rationalization is making sense from the first- or second-person perspective; where this is tied in the ways gestured at to the stream of consciousness.

This much was philosophical common currency up through the 1930s (Carnap's great 'Psychology in physical language' takes it as a starting point), and is a core message of certain core texts of post-war philosophy (including, as I read it, Ryle's monumental but perplexing *The Concept of Mind*, and also perhaps Anscombe's essential text *Intention*). Unfortunately, these (to my mind, rather obvious) points were washed out of the mainstream of Anglophone philosophy starting in about the mid-1950s (long story).

Berger's assertion that what rationalizes is not consciousness but 'content' is in this vein. Unfortunately, it is really not plausible that content has anything by itself to do with rationalization. My computer is a content engine, but has no interiority, and cannot be literally brought under rationalizing explanation (though, of course, the 'intentional stance' is always available). The same for this thermostat. The same for this lectern—which does not, after all, desire more than anything to be at the center of the universe and believe that it is at it: rationalizing its just sitting there.

What is rationalizing and rationalized is the contour of the stream of consciousness. That suggests that the character of the stream of consciousness is exhaustively characterizable in content-theoretic terms. That would also suggest that there is something to Brentano's distinction between 'original' and 'derived' intentionality: perhaps even that there is no intentionality outside of consciousness, but only an 'intentional stance'.

Berger's various examples deserve attention: I will focus on the most emblematic. The blindsight patient who makes it down the hall: what is it like for them? Is it like anything? Maybe so: maybe it is simply hard for them to describe. I have seen suggestions that blindsight patients navigate by echolocation. Having navigated by echolocation, I can say that it is like something—albeit something hard to describe. And I would say that going this way rather than that way *makes sense*: something looms up that way but not this way, and so I go this way rather than that way.

But perhaps it is like nothing. If so, then why do they go this way rather than that way? Why is *going this way* something they do, rather than *going that way*? Or is this a poorly-posed question? Would it be better to ask why *going this way*

is something they simply find themselves engaged in? I am inclined to think that if there is absolutely no difference for the blindsight patient to be in one sort of corridor or another, there is no answer of the former sort: at best answers of the latter sort.

More concisely: it is an open question whether blindsight is like something. If so, no problem for the consciousness-rationality link because consciousness is present. If not, then also no problem, because rationalization is absent.

2 Logue and Speaks

We would like to be able to say that in good cases, perception provides indefeasible justification for beliefs about the external world. That would be the holy grail of perceptual epistemology. Why can't we say that?

Because not all cases are good, of course: for example, sometimes we are misled by dreams. Without getting fancy, philosophers have exactly two options in regard to such cases: good and bad cases are the same, providing indefeasible justification at most for beliefs about the *internal* world; bad cases are different.

Let's not give up yet: let's say bad cases are different. This seems to leave exactly two options: bad-case perception is intrinsically bad; badness is due to a bad mixing of bad-case perception and bad-case cognition.

I'm inclined to wonder how anything in the mind could be intrinsically bad. Moreover, it seems obvious that (a) good-case perception can mix badly with cognition (as when we mistakenly think we are dreaming); (b) sometimes bad-case perception isn't misleading (as when we lucidly dream).

What could the bad mixing be? The difference between lucid dreaming and bad-case dreaming is over whether we think we are asleep. If we do, no problem; if we don't, problem. And the difference between good-case being awake and mistakenly thinking we are dreaming is over whether we think we are awake. If we do, no problem; if we don't, problem. To account for this, we could say that waking perception implies we are awake, while dreaming implies we are dreaming. Then the bad mixing would be contradiction between what perception

implies and what thought implies.

So bad cases are bad because we contradict ourselves. We don't notice the contradiction because perception involves a different mode of presentation than thought. So bad cases are Frege cases. Frege cases generally seem like not a big problem; so bad cases shouldn't seem like a big problem either. That's the line in 'There it is'.

Now in more detail. In 'mismatch cases', though one is in fact presented with an *F*, one's general background assumptions about one's situation entail that one is not presented with an *F*. Two examples:

1. (a) Fred is under the impression he is dreaming, and therefore not presented with any surface-color tropes but only with pseudo-color tropes
(b) Fred is in fact seeing, so that what is presented is a redness trope
(c) Fred thinks to himself 'that is pseudo-red' and thereby judges (incorrectly) that he is presented with something pseudo-red
2. (a) Ro is under the impression she is seeing, and therefore not presented with any pseudo-color tropes but instead with color tropes
(b) Ro is in fact dreaming, so that what is presented is a pseudo-redness trope
(c) Ro thinks to herself 'that is red' and thereby judges (incorrectly) that she is presented with something red

Central to my view is that if one is presented with a certain trope, one is certain that one is: it exists and is presented to one at every 'doxastic possibility'—every world compatible with what one believes—and this certainty tracks which quality the trope is an instance of. *There it is*: I may be uncertain about much, but this uncertainty is 'wrapped around' a basis of certainty in the reality of what is presented. That seems to be the epistemological core of direct realism.

If so, (1b) requires that in all Fred's doxastic possibilities, he is presented with a redness (and therefore surface-color) trope, while (2b) requires that in all

Ro's doxastic possibilities, she is presented with a pseudo-redness (and therefore pseudo-color) trope. But by (1a), in all Fred's doxastic possibilities, he is presented only with pseudo-color tropes, while by (2a), in all Ro's doxastic possibilities, she is presented only with surface-color tropes. So no world satisfies all the requirements for Fred, and no world satisfies all the requirements for Ro.

So when it comes to explaining the judgements in (1c) and (2c), what are we to say? Can we use the following 'good case' as a template?

3. (a) Sam is under the impression she is seeing, and therefore not presented with any pseudo-color tropes but only with surface-color tropes
- (b) Sam is in fact seeing, so that what is presented is a redness trope
- (c) Sam thinks to herself 'that is red' and thereby correctly believes that she is presented with something red

A prior question then arises: what would an explanation of (3c) look like? I suggest a family of 'evidential policies' which implicitly underlie one's strategy for recoding perception into thought. Roughly, a surface color term like 'red' is a 'recognitional concept' in the sense that one is guided in one's applications of it (and other color terms like 'green' and 'blue') by policies to be used when one is seeing: these policies create something like analytic equivalences between such color terms and the 'language' underlying perceptual presentation (in another chapter of the story, this language is said to be 'Lagadonian'). So: Sam accepts as definitional of 'red' its equivalence with some perception-language expression. She thinks she is seeing, and opens the drawer containing the policy for cases of seeing—which includes this definitional equivalence. Out of all the policies in that drawer (including those for 'green', 'blue', and the rest), the best fit is the policy for 'red'. So she carries it out.¹ As it happens, she is in luck: the policy she carries out does in fact apply (because the expression defined as equivalent to 'red' is in fact the expression she is producing), and she carries that policy out because

¹Speaks raises various concerns about the 'implicit definition' story: one, in particular, seems to involve the misconception that 'regard as equivalent' applies at the token level rather than the type level (obviously any attempt to appeal to something like syntactic derivation as a source of justification requires the definienda to be types rather than tokens).

she correctly believes it applies, so everything is great: full rational explanation has been produced.

Back to Fred and Ro. Does the story for Sam apply? No. Sam opens up the drawer of policies to be used when seeing, because, in her view, she is seeing. Is that why Ro opens that analogous drawer—applies concepts appropriate to seeing? Well, what does Ro believe—how are things, in Ro’s view? There is no full, transparent, coherent answer.² There are two partial coherent transparent answers: she is seeing; she is presented with a pseudo-redness trope. These combine to make one full coherent nontransparent answer: in one compartment, she is seeing, and in another compartment, she is presented with a pseudo-redness trope. The kind of answer we might have wanted to ‘why does Ro apply concepts appropriate to seeing’ is a full, transparent, coherent story about the world from Ro’s point of view—and there just isn’t one.³

OK, so something has resulted in Ro’s applying concepts appropriate to seeing. Why then does she apply ‘red’ rather than ‘green’? Presumably, doing the former would be appropriate just if one is presented with a redness trope; the latter just if one is presented with a greenness trope. Ro isn’t presented with either; so she does something inappropriate.

So: why (2c)? Not for reasons having to do with how the world is for Ro or with the ‘definitions’ governing the use of the expressions in which she encodes how the world is for her. Perhaps considerations of this sort exhaust the abstract backbone of (the relevant portions of) rational psychology. (Logue gestures in her closing remarks at the prospect of some alternative to or amendment of these resources, but I do not fully understand what she has in mind.) If so, there is no *rational* explanation of (2c).

This conclusion bothers both Logue and Speaks.⁴ They argue:

²Speaks seems in places to read me as meaning, implausibly, that there is *no* answer: not my claim.

³Perhaps the ‘compartment’ associated with articulate thought typically gets to carry the day here, as Speaks suggests. Perhaps so; but appeal to compartments is not transparent; more to the point, when we speak about compartments, we do so with the intention that rational psychology doesn’t apply to the facts on the ground, but only to a certain abstraction from them.

⁴Logue and Speaks are also bothered by the claim that ‘rational psychology is inapplicable to

(A) It would be worse for Ro to judge that she is presented with something purple (Logue, 3; Speaks, 8).

- Reply: it would certainly be *weirder*. If I put myself in Ro's position, I find that I too would believe I am presented with something red. That gives a sort of 'humanizing' aspect to Ro's actual reaction, whereas the alternative would be alien. But that only shows her reaction to be rational if the position I imagine myself into is rationally unimpeachable. It doesn't strike me from within as rationally impeachable, of course. But only internalists think that has overwhelming dialectical force.

On the counteroffensive: what exactly is the world like for Ro such that she judges herself to be presented with something red rather than something purple? No doubt a non-direct realist answer appealing to various philosophical inventions (sense-data, edenic representational states, structured propositions containing uninstantiated universals) could be concocted. But because no one but the philosopher understands this answer, it does not characterize what the world is like for Ro, and therefore cannot be a correct explanation of her judgement.

(B) It would be worse for Fred to judge he is presented with something red (Logue, 4).

- Reply: it certainly would. In that case, the 'conceptual' or 'articulate' fragment of Fred's psyche would harbor an obvious incoherence. An incoherence between aspects of one's view coded in the same way seems much less human than an incoherence between aspects coded in different ways. Maybe some would even find it worthy of reproach, as

the subject of a mismatch case'/'the subject is wholly outside the realm of rational psychology'. I am also bothered by that claim, insofar as I understand it. I am inclined to think the fundamental subject-matter of rational psychology is the *update*: the transition from neutrality to belief, or the commencement of an action. A subject might perform both rationally explicable and rationally inexplicable updates.

Logue suggests: though in my view rational psychology is about coherence and incoherence—sense and nonsense—rather than reproach and approbation.

(C) We can explain (2c) by saying ‘it looks/perceptually appears to Ro as if something red is before her’ (Logue, 5).

- Reply: that would be an explanatory solecism. ‘That looks *F* to me’ means ‘going by looking, that is *F*’. So ‘Ro judged that to be red (rather than green) because it looked red (rather than green) to her’ would mean ‘Ro judged that to be red (rather than green) because going by looking, here’s how things were for her: *that is red (rather than green)*’. That seems hard to distinguish from ‘Ro judged that to be red (rather than green) because, upon looking, she judged *that is red (rather than green)*’. That is obviously equivalent to ‘Ro judged that to be red (rather than green) because she went by looking’. We already knew Ro was going by looking, so that provides no further illumination. (Compare ‘There it is’, 159; ‘It’s still there’, 11.)

Counteroffensive: I wonder also how to extend this story to explain (1c): does it perceptually appear to Fred as if he is presented with a pseudo-red trope? If so, does it also perceptually appear to him as if he is presented with a redness trope? And does it perceptually appear to Ro as if she is presented with a pseudo-redness trope? If the perceptual appearances are supposed to be the justifiers, the suggestion is of a common factor view rather than of a version of ‘epistemological disjunctivism’ superior to mine.

(D) Perhaps we can explain (2c) using resources beyond my direct realist apparatus, in order to avoid pronouncing Ro incoherent (Speaks, 9).

- Depending on the details, I foresee several complications. (i) In order to avoid pronouncing Fred incoherent, we would need to explain (1c) using the alternative apparatus—in which case there goes direct

realism. (ii) If there is *nothing* presented to Ro, we are left wondering why she goes for red rather than purple or green; and either way, surely when I am dreaming *there it is*, whatever it may be. (iii) If something is presented to Ro that is determinable as between pseudo-red and surface-red, then that is also presented to Fred (seeing mismatch) and Sam (good case). But this sort of ‘moderate view’ drains the life out of direct realism, and threatens the good case with ‘mission creep’. The dialectic over mission creep is intricate: I discuss it elsewhere (‘The multidisjunctive conception of hallucination’, in Fiona MacPherson, editor, *Hallucination*: MIT, 2013). Finally, the moderate view makes cases of lucid dreaming inexplicable.

3 Summary

Put crudely, my position is that consciousness and rationality are one and the same; and that because consciousness is complex, so is rationality—so complex even that sometimes when we do what we think consciousness rationalizes, it yet does not. That’s the problem in perceptual bad cases: we are in a rational pickle.

Logue and Speaks seem tempted by the idea that whenever we do what we think consciousness rationalizes, we are right. Consciousness and rationality are one and the same, and consciousness is simple, so we never really get in a rational pickle.

Berger thinks that consciousness doesn’t have much to do with rationality at all. So there is no question of whether we can be mistaken about what consciousness rationalizes.

I would say that my sympathies lie closer to the view of Logue and Speaks than to the view of Berger. But both views are widespread in contemporary philosophy. I used to accept both, perhaps because of some picture-thinking I absorbed in my education. But having thought my way out of both, I have a hard time seeing the appeal of either.