

# On the Rational Contribution of Experiential Transparency<sup>1</sup>

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Does experience make an autonomous, epistemic contribution to knowledge? To answer this question positively is to vindicate a core tenet of empiricism: experience is not only a cause of our beliefs but a source and principle of our reasons and entitlements to believe. To maintain this without jettisoning our commonsense account of the world—a standard of success seldom met by the skeptics, idealists, and revisionists of both the classical and contemporary empiricist traditions—is the task Anil Gupta sets for himself in *Empiricism and Experience*.<sup>2</sup>

I wish in this essay to explore a central but incompletely developed claim that arises in Gupta's defense of empiricism: a perceptual experience's phenomenal character fixes its total epistemic contribution. Though Gupta thinks we ought to follow the classical empiricists and embrace this dependence, its consequences do not accord with his account of experience's epistemic contribution. After briefly presenting Gupta's account (§ I), I will argue that careful reflection on experience's phenomenal character uncovers a broader rational role for experience than Gupta countenances. In particular, I will argue that Gupta's commitment to the priority of phenomenology to perceptual epistemology allows the transparency of experience to be a source of absolute entitlements for several of our commonsense beliefs about the world (§ II).

Though the existence of a phenomenally-based source of absolute entitlements in experience undermines one of Gupta's principal

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<sup>2</sup> All page references will be to Gupta (2006) unless otherwise noted.

theses, it is my hope that he will nevertheless consider this conclusion a welcome amendment. For we will see that the success of Gupta's defense of empiricism depends on his ability to show that some views about the world, e.g. solipsism, are, in a sense to be elaborated, epistemically suspect. I will conclude by arguing that the epistemic contribution I attribute to experience supports this classification in a manner better aligned with Gupta's empiricist tendencies than the arguments that he, with his more limited resources, can provide (§ III).

## I.

The class of novel judgments that it is reasonable for one to make when one undergoes a perceptual experience is vast but limited.<sup>3</sup> A defender of empiricism must provide an account of perception in which particular experiences play an essential role both in the determination of this class and in the grounding of its members' positive epistemic status. Gupta calls this total epistemic contribution *the given* in an experience and proceeds to clarify its logical character.

According to Gupta, we cannot retain our commonsense conception of an experientially accessible, objective world populated with familiar, mind-independent entities if we take the given in experience to be propositional in form.<sup>4</sup> But if experience doesn't reveal facts about the world we perceive, if it doesn't itself fix the class of reasonable judgments one can make on its basis, how can it exert a rational constraint on perceptual belief at all?

Gupta thinks we can answer this question once we recognize that particular experiences make judgments reasonable only in conjunction with the "concepts, conceptions, and [background] beliefs" (76) that compose one's view of the world. We wish to understand the epistemic position of a rational, experiencing subject "from the internal viewpoint of the subject" (22) and, from such a perspective, the class of

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<sup>3</sup> The perceptual experiences that concern us are those "that are relatively short in duration and that occur in (but not only in) our simple, everyday perceptions of the world" (225). Though an experience can render reasonable both the formation of new judgments and the modification or rejection of beliefs one already possesses, I will often speak only of the former. I will also use 'epistemic role/contribution', 'rational role/contribution', and 'contribution to reasonableness' interchangeably. Gupta uses the first pair of expressions interchangeably, but provides a distinct meaning for 'reasonable' (202). The distinction is, for present purposes, unimportant.

<sup>4</sup> Gupta supplies two arguments for this claim in section 2C. The arguments themselves and the clarifications that follow are rich and reward careful reflection. This essay, however, is concerned with the consequences of Gupta's positive proposal and leaves such reflection for another occasion.

perceptual judgments it is reasonable for one to make is determined in part by the view one happens to possess at the time of the experience. Since an experience's ability to yield reasonable perceptual judgments is conditionally dependent on the view one possesses, we must conceive the given in an experience to be hypothetical in form. That is, "the logical category of the contribution of experience is not that of proposition but that of *function*" (79).<sup>5</sup> Experiences considered in isolation from views are epistemically mute; they do not pronounce on how things are. But in conjunction with a view, an experience can determine a conditionally reasonable class of perceptual judgments.

So the given in an experience can be thought of as the totality of view-to-judgment transitions the experience licenses. This comes out most clearly when we consider what the consequences would be of keeping a perceiver's experience fixed while varying the view she possesses. If one specifies, for every conceivable view, which judgments it would be rational for the view-possessing individual to make upon undergoing a particular experience, then one has, *ipso actu*, exhaustively characterized that experience's rational contribution.

It still remains to determine which features of experience are those in virtue of which it executes this logically hypothetical epistemic role. Gupta is not concerned with the nature of experience or with experience as a bearer of content.<sup>6</sup> In the context of this epistemological inquiry, focus is directed to those features of experience that are appreciable from the viewpoint of an experiencing subject and can be instantiated in a manner indifferent to the experience's view-dependencies.<sup>7</sup> According to Gupta, only those features that belong to the phenomenal character of experience satisfy these conditions. He claims that the given in experience "depends on the subjective character of experience" (85). Indeed, it depends on nothing else. For any

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<sup>5</sup> Simply saying that the rational contribution of experience has the logical form of a function is insufficient to capture Gupta's intent. A proposition can have the logical form of a function, say, a function from possible worlds to truth-values. A better analogy would be that of an argument form (cf. 80-2).

<sup>6</sup> Gupta happily concedes that experiences have contents and that these contents are, for many purposes, incredibly useful (20). He resists, however, the idea that experiential content attributions capture the given in experience.

<sup>7</sup> Consider, for example, our previous claims about the result of keeping a perceiver's experience fixed while varying the view she possesses. This is not a claim about experience individuated on metaphysical or semantic grounds. Without the resources of a particular view one may not be able to attribute a thorough or appropriate content to some experiences (83, 86) and, in some cases, one could not have an experience of a particular kind or nature unless one possesses a particular view (22, 106). So it is often impossible to fix the nature or content of an experience while varying one's view; the metaphysical and semantic principles of individuation for experiences are view-dependent.

experiences  $e$  and  $e'$ , if the subjectively appreciable phenomenal character of  $e$  is identical to (i.e. subjectively indistinguishable from) the subjectively appreciable phenomenal character of  $e'$ , then  $e$  and  $e'$  are *subjectively identical*.<sup>8</sup> The features of an experience upon which one bases one's assessments of subjective similarity are the very same features that determine an experience's rational contribution. This follows from what Gupta calls the *Equivalence Constraint*: "if  $e$  and  $e'$  are subjectively identical experiences of an individual, then the given in  $e$  is identical to the given in  $e'$ " (22).<sup>9</sup> So the "rational force that experience exerts on us [...] come[s] from [...] nothing other than the phenomenology of experience, how experience is from the subjective viewpoint" (107). For experiences conceived in abstraction from views, epistemology follows phenomenology.

Though I have reservations, let us grant for the sake of argument that there is a coherent characterization of the subjective appreciation of a conscious perceptual experience's phenomenal character that (i) prescind from all view-dependent attributions of content, (ii) prescind from all view-dependent principles of individuation, and (iii) is such that one can make epistemically relevant assessments of subjective similarity on its basis. Does phenomenal character so-conceived ground only a single, hypothetical, epistemic function for experience as Gupta contends? In the following section, I argue that experience's phenomenal character can place substantive, non-hypothetical constraints on the reasonableness of views. If this is correct, the given in experience is more than hypothetical in form.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. 5-6 (especially 6 fn. 3), 22, 86, and 226-229.

<sup>9</sup> Gupta also holds the equivalence constraint's converse (86). These equivalence constraints entail that it is possible for metaphysically distinct experience (or experience with different contents) to be subjectively identical and thereby have an identical given.

<sup>10</sup> There are places where Gupta appears to invoke experience's phenomenal character to ground categorical epistemic constraints on views. He argues on the basis of phenomenological considerations that the following are reasonable: (i) *if* experiences provide one with propositionally structured information, it will include propositions of the form 'this  $K$  is  $F$ ' (33), (ii) experiences neither acquaint us with nor contain any reference to normal circumstances (34 fn. 29), (iii) we are not, in experience, presented with our states of experiencing themselves or with their intrinsic characteristics (150), (iv) the objects of experience can be temporally extended (230 fn. 9), and (v) the adverbial theory of perceptual consciousness is difficult to maintain (233 fn. 14). But it is not clear whether Gupta thinks the reasonableness of these claims has the given-fixing, view-independent phenomenal character of experience as its source or whether he thinks these claims simply belong to the class of reasonable judgments that the given in experience yields in conjunction with our commonsense view of the world.

## II.

One of the most striking features of perceptual experience is its *transparency*. Consider Harman's description of experiential transparency in the following, oft-quoted passage:

[...] sense datum theorists assert that the color [Eloise] is aware of [when she has an experience as of a tree] is inner and mental and not a property of external objects. But, this sense datum claim is counter to ordinary visual experience. When Eloise sees a tree before her, the colors she experiences are all experienced as features of the tree and its surroundings. None of them are experienced as intrinsic features of her experience. [...] Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your experience. I predict that you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the tree, including relational features of the tree "from here." (Harman (1990) p. 39)

Though this passage engages a variety of (ultimately extraneous) topics,<sup>11</sup> its principal offering is an observation about perceptual experience's phenomenal character.

**Experiential Transparency:** The sensuous qualities, objects, and states of affairs that are phenomenally appreciable in an experience are always appreciated as being, being instantiated in, or being about something other than either (a) oneself *qua* experiential subject or (b) the experience as such.<sup>12</sup>

Most of the time, the phenomenally appreciable sensuous qualities in an experience appear to be located or instantiated in an objective,

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. the (direct/immediate) objects of introspection, awareness, and attention; the nature of intrinsic properties; and the perennial philosophical oppositions between the internal and the external, the private and the public, and the mental (or mind-dependent) and the non-mental (or mind-independent).

<sup>12</sup> Three clarifications: (i) Sensuous qualities are usually introduced by example, say, the way a C# note sounds when one hears it being played on a piano or the way a pain feels when one experiences a pin pierce one's skin. Though much else can be said, let us note that a sufficient (but not necessary) condition for a feature to be sensuous is for it to belong to one and only one phenomenal modality, i.e. for it to be appreciated as having a location within one and only one manifold of phenomenal similarity. (ii) The sensuous elements in experience do not exhaust what is phenomenally appreciable in experience. (iii) Clause (a) contains the qualifier '*qua* experiential subject' in order to count as transparent one's visual experience of, say, the color of one's leg.

spatiotemporal body or in something that one can demonstrate on the basis of the experience. As Harman's passage predicts, when one focuses on the phenomenal character of an experience as of a tree, the sensuous green one appreciates is appreciated as a quality *of* the tree's leaves. But apparent instantiation in an objective or demonstrable object isn't required for a sensuous quality to manifest itself transparently. For example, even a *ganzfeld* experience in which one's visual field is completely permeated with an undifferentiated sensuous blue will count as transparent. Given one's view, undergoing this experience may render it reasonable to judge that the sensuous blue is a property of the experience itself or a property of oneself. But if Gupta is correct, an experience's phenomenal character is appreciable independently of the view one brings to bear on it. As a matter of such "pure" phenomenology, the sensuous blue in the experience is not appreciated as a quality *of* the experience or *of* oneself *qua* experimental subject; it is appreciated as a quality *of that which is present* in the experience.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps one can say nothing more determinate of the subject of instantiation than that it is "other" or that it is "before" or "present to" one. What matters for our purposes is that the self-attribution of sensuous qualities is not facilitated by the mere appreciation thereof.<sup>14</sup>

Experiential transparency cannot be neglected when determining the given in an experience. Transparency is essential to even the most minimal description of the phenomenal character of most, if not all, of our conscious experiences. Its absence would certainly affect evaluations of subjective similarity and identity. And according to Gupta, if a feature of experience affects evaluations of subjective similarity, then the feature is epistemically significant (86).

So what does transparency impart to the given in an experience? Surprisingly, Gupta claims that it imparts nothing at all. Gupta argues that "the phenomenological transparency of experience has no epistemic or semantical force: it yields no unmediated entitlement to ordinary

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<sup>13</sup> Even pain experiences, for which there is, admittedly, a genuine and phenomenally grounded sense of ownership, manifest sensuous qualities that one appreciates as being instantiated in the pain *qua* other. Pain experiences are experiences *of* pain that one *has*; the phenomenal appreciation of sensuous pain is an apparent confrontation with something other than oneself.

<sup>14</sup> The quite minimal notions of *self* and *other* invoked in this discussion allow two equivalent restatements of our characterization of experiential transparency.

**Minimal Transparency (negative):** An experience is transparent iff its phenomenally appreciable sensuous qualities are never appreciated as being instantiated in the self.

**Minimal Transparency (positive):** An experience is transparent iff its phenomenally appreciable sensuous qualities are always appreciated as being instantiated in the other.

judgments of perception, and it establishes no privileged semantical links for ordinary terms” (146). The phenomenon is nothing but “a *mere* seeming, one of great practical value but of no semantical or epistemological significance whatsoever” (145).<sup>15</sup>

We can agree with Gupta that phenomenological considerations are of no help to those interested in granting experience the status of an epistemological or semantical foundation. It does not follow, however, that experiential transparency is epistemically insignificant. For the fact that transparency is phenomenally appreciable places the following rational constraint on one’s beliefs: one’s view must make the possibility of this feature of experience intelligible. A view is more than simply a collection of perceptual beliefs. It also contains one’s broad metaphysical commitments and conceptual resources regardless of whether they constitute the refined systems of the professional philosopher or the merely implicit, though often practically significant, commitments of the philosophically unreflective. The epistemic significance of experiential transparency lies in its making the acceptance of some views, namely, those with the resources to allow or explain its manifestation in experience, more reasonable, *prima facie*, than others.

The metaphysical leeway in views that meet this condition is vast. Moreover, the relevant constituents of the privileged views need not even be about the nature of experience. So I agree with Gupta that “one cannot read the metaphysics of experience from the

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<sup>15</sup> Though not essential to the point being made here, it should be noted that Gupta’s characterization of experiential transparency is importantly different from the preceding. His primary target is “the phenomenological character of direct awareness” which has two aspects, namely, a “transparent self and [a] vividly present reality” (145). The first aspect reflects the fact that the self is in no way appreciable in experience. While I disagree with this, a clarification of the sense in which the self is appreciable in experience would take us far afield. The second aspect, a vividly present reality, is cashed out in terms of immediacy. It is the appreciation of this phenomenal immediacy or presence, according to Gupta, that has led many to consider experience “a source of unmediated justification or of privileged semantical links” (142).

phenomenology” (231).<sup>16</sup> But not every view possesses the resources to render experiential transparency intelligible and even fewer possess the resources to explain how its manifestation is possible. Those that do are epistemically privileged. In particular, I contend that our phenomenological reflections impart a *prima facie* entitlement to those views which countenance interaction with distinct existences or, at a minimum, to those views which equip one with the conceptual resources to think in terms of *self* and *other*.<sup>17</sup>

Two brief clarifications are in order. First, if experiential transparency *prima facie* entitles one to the claim that there are existences distinct from oneself, this is not because a proposition, say, ‘something

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<sup>16</sup> Appeals to phenomenal character cannot settle questions about whether experiences are of sense data, worldly objects, representational contents, or are best conceived as adverbial manners of experiencing. Appeals to phenomenal character cannot even settle whether the content of an experience depends on systematic encounters with objects in one’s environment, or whether a particular experience is veridical or illusory. Moreover, the means by which a phenomenally appreciable scene becomes present to one is not itself phenomenally appreciable. Perhaps one has an experience with a particular appreciable phenomenal character because one is in a representational state with a special kind of content or a particular functionally specified role. Perhaps one has this experience because one stands in some (primitive) relation of acquaintance or direct awareness to objects, properties, or facts. Perhaps one has this experience through the divine dispensation of an omnipotent god. Whatever the source, it is invisible; there is nothing in the phenomenal character of perceptual experience that guarantees the truth of a particular origination tale. Given this, it is somewhat surprising that experiential transparency has, in the last twenty years, been invoked primarily to support *representationalism*—the thesis that the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience supervenes on (or is identical with) that experience’s representational content (cf. Harman (1990) and Tye (2002)). At least representationalists can take solace in the fact that naïve realism and acquaintance theories are not supported by experiential transparency either (cf. Martin (2002) for such an attempt).

<sup>17</sup> These entitlements need not exhaust experiential transparency’s rational contribution. Though I dislike ‘presenting propositions to us’, ‘immediate justification’, and similar expressions, the spirit of the following quote goes some way toward motivating this additional significance.

“In my view, it’s not the irresistibility of our perceptual beliefs, nor the nature of our concepts, which explains why our experiences give us the immediate justification they do. Rather, it’s the peculiar “phenomenal force” or way our experiences have of presenting propositions to us. Our experience represent propositions in such a way that it “feels as if” we could tell that those propositions are true—and that we’re perceiving them to be true—just by virtue of having them so represented” (Pryor (2000) p. 547 fn. 37).

Experiential transparency does not exhaust such a “phenomenal force” but it is, I submit, essential to it. Though development of these thoughts will have to wait for another occasion, let us note, for now, that this additional rational contribution needn’t require the positing of a propositional given and will not aid those who look to perceptual experience for epistemological or semantical foundations.

other than me and my experiences exists', is part of the content of transparent perceptual experiences. Experiential transparency need not stand in a relation of veridicality to some state of affairs.

Second, something must be said about what it is for an entitlement to be *prima facie*. This notion finds no echo in *Empiricism and Experience*. Gupta is prone to talk about the "rational force" that experience possesses by virtue of which one must accept some view or other.<sup>18</sup> On the present proposal, the phenomenal character of experience imparts some modicum of entitlement to a class of views (or to the relevant constituents thereof). These entitlements, in being *prima facie*, are defeasible. But even if the course of one's experiences "forces" one to reject such a view, it will still possess the entitlement that originates from our experiences appearing as they do. These *prima facie* entitlements contribute to our default epistemic position; our original epistemic position is not neutral.<sup>19</sup>

### III.

The presence in experience of a phenomenally-based, non-hypothetical, rational contribution is relevant to other areas of Gupta's empiricist program. This can be seen by reflecting on the logic of rational, experience-initiated revisions of views and on Gupta's account of how these revisions can be a source of absolute entitlements.<sup>20</sup>

According to Gupta, the given in a particular experience does two things when conjoined with a view: (i) it provides the experiencing subject with hypothetical reasons to form novel beliefs (and, on occasion, to modify or reject standing beliefs), and (ii) it preserves the epistemic

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. 32 fn. 27, 33 fn. 28, and 107.

<sup>19</sup> Though I have expressed the proposal in terms of a class of views receiving a positive, *prima facie* entitlement, one could instead propose that the epistemic upshot of experiential transparency is some class of views being made *prima facie* unreasonable. On this alternative proposal, views that are, say, inconsistent or explanatorily idle with respect to the possibility of experiential transparency, are burdened with an epistemic hurdle. Given that "experience is [the] principal epistemic authority and guide" (3) of our empirical inquiries and that, in general, "our aim in inquiry is truth" (159), I am inclined to take any phenomenon that is manifest in experience as universally as is experiential transparency to be a positive contributor to our attainment of such truths. However, with respect to this paper's primary goal, viz. showing that the given in experience is more than hypothetical in form, either proposal will do. To meet this goal requires only that the rationality of views be differentially assessed in light of how the views stand to the actually appreciable features of our experiences' phenomenal characters. This clarification is prompted by a conversation with Gupta. He favors the latter proposal.

<sup>20</sup> For our purposes, we can prescind from the details and focus on the core idea behind Gupta's account. Chapter four contains the details with all the precision that logical formalization affords.

status of the subject's view.<sup>21</sup> When a view (even if erroneous, confused, or unreasonable) is brought to bear on an experience, it provides the experiencing subject with hypothetical reasons to make particular judgments (even if these judgments are false, confused, or unreasonable under alternative views). And, "provided that the view that we bring to bear on experience is rational, the resulting perceptual judgments are rational" (163).<sup>22</sup> But if these productive and preservative roles exhaust the given in a particular experience, how can we ever be absolutely entitled to any of our beliefs? For to be absolutely entitled to a perceptual judgment would require, it seems, a prior absolute entitlement to one's view. And the only material left from which Gupta can construct absolute entitlements to views, namely, the subjective reasons individual experiences provide, are view-dependent.

We can see how absolute entitlements arise, Gupta argues, if we shift our attention to *series* of experiences. An experiencing subject is rationally obligated to revise her view. A revision may consist in nothing more than the acceptance of some (or all) of the conditionally reasonable perceptual judgments a particular experience yields or it may involve the rejection or modification of previously held beliefs. The successive rational revisions occasioned by a series of experiences result in a corresponding sequence of revised views that Gupta calls an *epistemic revision sequence*. If a series of experiences would rationally commit one to accept a view that contains a particular belief *no matter what view one initially possesses*—that is, if every conceivable epistemic revision sequence contains, after some stage, only views that comprise a particular belief—then the experiencing subject's rational obligation to accept that particular belief is unconditional. One's entitlement to such a belief does not arise in a view-independent manner, but differences in the identity and epistemic status of the view one happens to possess when the experiences commence is, in such circumstances, of no epistemic significance. For Gupta, universal reasonableness begets absolute entitlement.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that experience preserves all of one's antecedently established entitlements. A particular experience can make it rational to modify or reject what one was previously entitled to believe. But, just as logical inference preserves truth, experiential belief revision preserves one's subjective rationality.

<sup>22</sup> Nearly identical claims are made about the preservation of entitlements (76), justifications (7, 76, 164), and reasonableness (202).

<sup>23</sup> So according to Gupta, in order to understand experience's epistemic contribution to knowledge one must have a prior understanding of experience's contribution to subjective rationality. An example of the converse orientation in which the task of understanding how experience can make knowledge available is taken to be more fundamental than that of understanding the subjective rationality/reasonableness of our perceptual judgments, see McDowell (2009). I remain neutral about which of these methodological priorities (or whether either of them) is best.

Unfortunately, to demand that a belief survive a process of epistemic revision for *every* conceivable initial view guarantees that experience will generate few (if any) absolute entitlements. Consider a solipsistic view. Though suitably bizarre experiences might make it rational for one to accept a solipsistic view, *no* series of experiences would rationally oblige a solipsist to accept any of our commonsense perceptual judgments. If “the dynamical behavior of [a] view under possible streams of experience” (159) is like that of a solipsistic view, it is *rigid*.

In order to preserve the possibility of experientially-based, absolute entitlements, Gupta must restrict the class of views with which one begins the process of epistemic revision. Given the resources at his disposal, he must resort to a limited rationalism. Since the goal of empirical inquiry is truth, and rigidity prevents a view from being sufficiently sensitive to experience’s role as a guide to truth, one is justified in treating as initially inadmissible those views which one determines to be rigid. And that a particular view is rigid “can be determined *a priori*” (159).

If, however, we countenance the rational contribution of experience elaborated in section II, then we will have the resources to reject the initial admissibility of solipsistic worldviews on empiricist grounds alone. In general, the fact that something is phenomenally appreciable in experience imparts a *prima facie* entitlement to those views which render the phenomenon intelligible or, better, serve to explain its possibility. That the sensuous qualities in experience manifest themselves transparently is phenomenally appreciable. I have argued that views which commit one to the existence of something distinct from oneself, some *other* in which the experience’s sensuous qualities can be instantiated, are among those that receive the *prima facie* entitlements experiential transparency yields. At a minimum, experiential transparency imparts a *prima facie* entitlement to views with the conceptual resources required to make the distinction between *self* and *other* intelligible.

One need not classify as initially admissible a view that cannot even render the phenomenally appreciable features of one’s experiences intelligible. Nor is it rational to consider every remaining conceivable view when determining an experiential series’ epistemic consequences if a number of these views already possess some modicum of unconditional reasonableness. Even if the solipsist can intelligibly conceive of something as *other*, she will be explanatorily deficient with respect to the possibility of experiential transparency in comparison to alternative views.<sup>24</sup> So one need not appeal to *a priori* judgments about the

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<sup>24</sup> The non-solipsist can use her concepts *self* and *other* to describe the solipsist as one who believes that the latter has no extension. It is not obvious, however, that the solipsist can intelligibly conceive this distinction.

dynamical behavior of views undergoing processes of epistemic revision to be rational in classifying solipsism as initially inadmissible. Experience itself reveals solipsism's epistemic deficiencies and preserves the possibility of experientially-based, absolute entitlements.<sup>25</sup>

According to Gupta, to perceive is to enter an epistemological nexus of three elements: a view, an experience, and a class of perceptual judgments. Within this nexus, experience is the fulcrum upon which the rationality of views and perceptual judgments pivot. This epistemic role is grounded in experience's phenomenal character. I hope to have shown that careful reflection on this phenomenal ground can be a source of epistemological insights and can reveal additional epistemic roles for experience.

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<sup>25</sup> Considerations of this sort may not be sufficient to render all rigid views inadmissible. But I have little confidence in our ability to reach definite conclusions about the dynamical behavior of views undergoing processes of epistemic revision and a corresponding lack of confidence in appeals to such *a priori* reasoning as a ground for attributions of inadmissibility.