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Between Deference and Self-Assurance:
Reconciling Realism and Response-Dependence

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Abstract:

Between Deference and Self-Assurance: Reconciling Realism and Response-Dependence

This thesis deals with response-dependence accounts of concepts - concepts the extensions of which are determined by our responses under certain conditions - and the possibility of realist construals of practices involving such concepts. Drawing attention to distinctions between different types of response-dependent concepts, Chapter I proposes an account of response-dependence that recognises a variegation of types of concept that can plausibly be identified as response-dependent. Chapter II continues the development of this account by considering matters relevant to the form and content of the biconditional theorems (*basic equations*) of which response-dependence accounts are comprised.

The account I propose in these first two chapters attempts to abstract from the details of existing accounts. Nevertheless, the middle section of the thesis – Chapters III, IV, V and VI – provide critical exegeses of response-dependence accounts developed by three authors – Mark Johnston’s Response-Dispositionalism, Philip Pettit’s Global Response-Dependence account of *basic* concepts and Crispin Wright’s Order of Determination distinction - accounts that have been fundamental to and influential in the literature on response dependence.

Consideration of Crispin Wright’s *realism relevant* distinctions provides a bridge to Chapter VII where I undertake a detailed analysis of realism, according to which realism is recognised as an array of commitments that are best understood as organised within three distinctive and largely independent clusters – semantic, ontic

and epistemic. Finally, in Chapter VIII we are able to effect a productive engagement between realism, understood according to the taxonomic exercise undertaken in Chapter VII, and response-dependence, understood according to the account developed and promoted in Chapters I and II, an engagement that results in a more fine-grained and sophisticated analysis of the prospects for a reconciliation of realism and response-dependence than has yet appeared in the literature.

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